Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World

US Foreign Policy and the Modernization of Iran

Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and the Shah

BEN OFFILER

Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World
Edited by Effie G. H. Pedaliu, LSE-Ideas and John W. Young, University of Nottingham

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US Foreign Policy and the Modernization of Iran

Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and the Shah

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2015 978-1-137-48220-4
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First published 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-349-57990-7 ISBN 978-1-137-48221-1 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9781137482211

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

To my wife, Sammy,
And my parents

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Acknowledgements

Like most books, this one has been a long time in the making and as such has generated a number of debts along the way. I have had the pleasure of working with some outstanding historians over the years who have been wonderfully supportive, setting a high standard of scholarly rigour and professionalism that I continue to aspire to. Professor Matthew Jones and Dr Bevan Sewell's invaluable advice, challenging critiques, and endless patience have been integral to the shaping of my research. Dr Maria Ryan helped establish the project and has been a fantastic support. Professor John Young and Professor Steven Casey examined my research and provided both incisive critique and invaluable advice. I am extremely appreciative of the fact that they took the time to thoroughly examine the work and for making it such an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Special thanks go to Professor Scott Lucas, who has also given me much welcome advice and encouragement.

I am extremely grateful to the editorial team at Palgrave Macmillan, especially Angharad Bishop, Clare Mence, and Emily Russell, for making the production of this book such a pleasurable experience as well as for their expert advice and patience. Angharad in particular displayed remarkable patience and good humour when responding to my incessant queries. The Arts and Humanities Research Council has generously supported my research, including a three-year maintenance grant and funding for my research trip to the United States. I would like to thank the staff at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, the National Archives in College Park, MD, and the British Library at St Pancras and Colindale; their friendly assistance made the research that much easier. The Eccles Centre's Postgraduate Award also allowed me to conduct invaluable research at the British Library.

It goes without saying that I am not above taking advantage of the kindness of my friends; Hannah Durkin, Ian Evans, Ben Farrer, and John Horne were all good enough to read parts of this book, make useful suggestions, and offer constant support, for which I am extremely grateful.

My family has been unwavering in their encouragement and support; I will always be impressed by their ability to do this while feigning interest in the history of US foreign relations. Maria and Paul Finney provided much-needed weekend sustenance over the years, ensuring that

I never needed to learn how to cook a Sunday roast. My brothers Philip and Simon, and my favourite sister-in-law Trish, have all been extraordinarily supportive and unfailingly good-humoured about my preoccupation with my research over the last few years.

This book would not have been possible, both figuratively and literally, were it not for my parents, June and Michael Offiler, who shared with me from a young age a love of history and learning, a gift that I will always cherish. I hope that this book goes some way to showing my appreciation for all their love and support.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Sammy, for, well, pretty much everything. More than anyone else, Sammy has endured the all-consuming nature of the research and writing process right alongside me, discussing my ideas and making incisive suggestions. She has helped me to overcome so many obstacles and reminded me that there is a world outside Washington and Tehran in the 1960s (who knew?). I shall never be able to repay her support, but I hope that, as we begin a new chapter in our lives together, my absolute and unconditional love for her will be a start.

Introduction

On 11 April 1962, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, landed in Washington, DC, stepping off his plane to be greeted by the president of the United States, John F. Kennedy. Accompanied by his wife, Empress Farah Pahlavi, it was only the Shah's second official visit since a CIA-orchestrated *coup d'état* had restored him to the Peacock Throne in 1953. Forced by the inclement weather to welcome his royal guest inside an airport hangar, JFK joked, "This is one of our wonderful spring days, for which we are justly celebrated."[1] Turning to the business at hand, the president told the Shah, "On your shoulders hang heavy burdens and heavy responsibilities"; not least due to Iran's strategic location, "surrounded…by vital and powerful people," but also because of his desire "to make a better life for your people."[2]

As the official visit ended, Kennedy and the Shah declared that it had "strengthened the bonds of friendship between them in their quest for common objectives of peace and well-being."[3] The joint statement released by both governments framed the issue of development and modernization as the focal point of the discussions. Both leaders agreed that Iran needed to focus "on the necessity of achieving a high level of internal economic development and social welfare in order to continue the internal stability necessary to resist external threats."[4] The message complied with the rhetoric used by JFK in his inaugural address, which warned, "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."[5] It emphasized the basic assumption that sat at the heart of the modernization theories that have become synonymous with the Kennedy administration, namely that economic development leads to domestic stability, thereby helping to inoculate against communist subversion.[6]

Yet, the visit was not quite as harmonious as the public pronouncements suggest. Bad weather aside, from the outset there were signs that proceedings would not go as smoothly as planned. As the Shah's plane landed, it was met by a protest by the Iranian Students Association; although small in number – and kept out of sight of JFK and the Shah – their support for the ousted prime minister, Mohammad Mossadeq, signalled burgeoning discontent regarding the Shah's regime and its relationship with the United States.[7] In the years to come, these

anti-regime protestors would remain a thorn in the side of US–Iranian relations.

Moreover, the topics discussed by Kennedy and the Shah during the actual meetings themselves were not limited to questions of modernization and development. Indeed, in the run-up to the Shah's arrival, Kenneth Hansen, the assistant director of the Bureau of Budget, complained that the administration's preparations were neglecting issues of development and focusing instead on Iran's military needs.[8] It was, according to Hansen, the question of reform and development that the US should concern itself with as outlined by the Iran Task Force set up by Kennedy in response to the country's post-election crisis the previous year.

Seeking to differentiate itself from its predecessor, the Kennedy administration placed a high premium on the expanded role that foreign aid and economic development had to play in bolstering friendly nations against the threat of Soviet encroachment.[9] In his final meeting with the Shah, the president stressed that Washington was "pinning great hopes" on Iran's modernization.[10] Kennedy declared that "nothing contributed so much to the Shah's prestige as Iran's economic programme," which the United States was "very interested in cooperating with…as far as our resources would permit."[11] The Shah concurred, noting that "he had been working for twenty years at the task of building a strong anti-Communist society through social reform and economic development."[12] However, the Shah's vision of modernity differed significantly from Washington's.

While he accepted the importance of social and economic development, he stated unequivocally that "to succeed on the economic side Iran needs time and security."[13] Modernization, according to the Shah, would be achieved through Iran's military. Rather than economic development, it was "the existence of revamped armed forces which will give Iran the prestige it has needed."[14] Warming to his theme, the Shah enthused that "with such an army Iran can resist Communist pressures and build the country into a showcase."[15] This fundamental difference in emphasis was to become the defining feature of US–Iranian relations throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Despite there being some agreement between Washington and Tehran on the desirability of pursuing economic development, the Shah prioritized military modernization to achieve Iran's – and the Pahlavi dynasty's – security above all else. Recognizing Iran's strategic value, the United States made maintaining close ties with the Shah its primary objective.

Moreover, as the years passed, the Shah demonstrated a skill for persuasively presenting his own vision of modernity. Throughout the

1960s, Iran's strategic and geographic position combined with Tehran's capacity to make its own case for Iranian-driven development to render the role of modernization theory in US policy ineffectual and obsolete. The question, then, is why did the United States during this period focus on stability, putting all its eggs in the Shah's basket, rather than on development? Did some US officials favour a military sales relationship in order to keep the Shah happy because they saw him as the key to Iranian security? Or was the Shah able to manipulate Washington into turning away from modernization and accepting his version of modernity, which prioritized a strong military?

This book argues that the contest over modernization during the administrations of Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon intersected each of these factors. Internal debates created tension between advocates of modernization and traditionalists who preferred to focus on pursuing a close relationship with the Shah in order to maintain Iran's stability, which in turn created an often incoherent approach to Iran. At the same time, the Shah proved himself adept at exploiting American fears of communist subversion and presenting himself – and thus his vision of modernity – as the only viable option for ensuring Iranian security. It is in this intersection of factors that we see how the contest over modernization in US–Iranian relations played out in the 1960s.

It was not, therefore, simply the case that modernization was the driving force of US policy at the beginning of the decade and then disappeared by the 1970s, although its influence did indeed decline. Rather, the example of Iran shows that US policymakers struggled, internally and in their engagement with the Shah, over the question of precisely what role modernization should have. It was this question that remained at the heart of US–Iranian relations throughout the 1960s, creating a remarkably high level of continuity in Washington's policy as successive administrations grappled with the issue of modernization. As the US responded to Iran's strategic importance by placing greater emphasis on stability, and as the Shah skilfully persuaded Washington to view him as the key to US objectives, American policymakers chose to accept the Shah's vision of modernization by backing him through an ever-expanding military sales relationship.

* * *

The historiography on modernization in US foreign relations has expanded rapidly in the years since Nick Cullather urged historians to treat modernization "as a subject instead of a methodology."[16] In his

excellent assessment of modernization theory's influence on the Kennedy administration, *Modernization as Ideology,* Michael Latham argues that US officials "conceived of it as a means to promote a liberal world in which the development of 'emerging' nations would protect the security of the United States."[17] Modernization theory is considered to have reached its zenith during the Kennedy years when "it enjoyed such popularity that few dissented against its assumptions and predictions, even when clear evidence pointed in other directions."[18] Furthermore, by the 1970s, modernization theory was no longer embraced in the way that it had been by Kennedy.[19] The failure of American development projects in important Cold War battlegrounds, most notably in Vietnam, signaled the demise of modernization as a driving force of US foreign policy. However, this book will show that the influence of modernization theory over US policy towards Iran actually began to decline while Kennedy was still in office. Furthermore, it complicates the claim that modernization was an ideology for the Kennedy administration. While many US officials adhered to the basic tenets of modernization theory as an explanatory model, there was serious internal debate over its validity as a solution to foreign policy problems. Whether or not modernization was an ideology, its influence over US policy towards Iran was ultimately relatively marginal.[20]

Brad Simpson's analysis of US policy and modernization theory in Indonesia offers a useful parallel with Washington's encounter with Iran in the 1960s.[21] Simpson demonstrates how the Kennedy administration supported a regime built upon military and educated elites in order to pursue American national interests in the country through modernization. In Iran, however, the support given by the United States to the Shah's military regime was motivated more by the perceived need to ensure friendly relations with the Iranian monarch as the key figure in maintaining Iran's stability rather than a belief in the military as an effective conduit for development. The key difference lies in the fact that successive US governments saw the Shah as the means to stability in Iran; although some attempts were made at pushing the Shah, tentatively, towards reform and development, Washington's reliance on him for achieving its national security goals meant that Iran's modernization reflected the Shah's predilections more than it did the modernization theories of American academics.

By examining US–Iranian relations in this era, we can see that the normal periodizations associated with the Cold War and modernization do not stand up to scrutiny. While this book acknowledges that modernization theory helped form the views of US officials about the

Third World, it argues that, in practice, US policy towards Iran was rarely driven by issues of modernization. A close study of Kennedy's relations with Iran demonstrates that as early as 1961, bureaucratic tensions were rife within Washington over the place of modernization theory in US policy towards Tehran. The National Security Council staff, especially Robert Komer and Harold Saunders, supported by others in Kennedy's inner circle, such as McGeorge Bundy, advocated pressuring the Shah to pursue a wide-ranging development programme. The Iran Task Force, set up by Kennedy early in his administration, suggested that economic development and social reform would help inoculate the Shah's regime against internal instability.

Yet, despite the New Frontier's enthusiasm for development, proponents of modernization encountered strong resistance from the Tehran embassy, which consistently argued that the United States should not push the Shah too hard on issues of development or risk jeopardizing Washington's relationship with him. Bureaucratic disputes over the efficacy of modernization contributed to an incoherent Iran strategy that privileged security issues, primarily through arms sales and a policy of flattering the Shah to keep him on side at the expense of effectively pursuing development. Even while US officials accepted the basic premise of modernization theory, policymakers throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s prioritized security considerations and sidelined development issues.

Rather than considering the importance of development issues, US policymakers turned their attention to ensuring the Shah, whom they considered the key to Iranian stability, did not become dissatisfied with his relationship with the United States. Washington adopted a policy whereby US officials sought to placate the Shah on a number of serious questions in order to keep US–Iranian relations as amicable as possible. American appraisals of the Shah as being of a nervous and paranoid temperament led successive governments to try and resolve what they termed the "massage problem" through a combination of flattery, appeasement, and direct support.[22] Because the Shah was considered central to US interests in Iran, even during the Kennedy administration, the need to resolve the "massage problem" repeatedly superseded questions of reform and development. Modernization's waning influence was further exacerbated by the policies of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, who both exhibited a remarkable level of continuity by building upon the precedents set by Kennedy.

Indeed, the assertion that "by the close of the 1960s, events at home as well as abroad raised serious questions about the modernization model"

is only true up to a point.[23] First, serious questions had been raised by important policymakers, most notably Ambassador Julius C. Holmes, throughout Kennedy's short time in office, supposedly the high-water mark of modernization. Second, some US officials maintained as late as August 1970 that focusing on Iran's economic development was essential to its stability. Modernization did not simply die at the end of the 1960s; it survived as a concept for understanding the world, and even into the Nixon administration, low- and mid-level officials continued to advocate the pursuit of economic development as the best means of achieving Washington's security goals in Iran.

However, just as Kennedy and then Johnson had done, Nixon prioritized achieving US security interests through arms sales and strengthening ties with the Shah ahead of the pursuit of modernization. The Nixon administration reflected Kennedy- and Johnson-era policies by subordinating the contest over modernization to these other priorities, illustrating that Nixon's presidency represented a continuation in US policy rather than a sharp deviation. While Nixon may have been more willing to ignore modernization than Kennedy or Johnson had been, both of whom were often reluctant to embrace the Shah through other means, his decision in May 1972 to expand the US–Iranian arms relationship by agreeing to sell Tehran any non-nuclear military equipment was ultimately an extension, albeit a dramatic one, of the logic that had driven his predecessors' policies.

The second strand of historiography that this book will help to recast is the question of US–Iranian relations. The ill-fated union between the United States and the last Shah of Iran has often been reduced to accounts of the coup in 1953 that restored Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to the throne and the turmoil of the Iranian Revolution that shocked the West and toppled America's closest ally in the Middle East.[24] The CIA-orchestrated *coup d'état* that ousted the democratically elected prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq set in motion the tightening of the US–Iranian relationship, which, at least in popular imagination, led directly to the outpouring of anti-Shah discontent that coalesced into the revolutionary fervour of 1978 and 1979. Such an overly simplistic narrative neglects the important period between these two momentous events, particularly the policies of Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon.

The era in question requires detailed investigation not just to flesh out our understanding of Iran's trajectory from coup to revolution. As Victor Nemchenok has written, viewing the 1960s only as prelude to the Iranian Revolution at times "obscures more than it illuminates…because it fails to analyse US policy during that time period on its own terms."[25]

Despite some renewed interest in US–Iranian relations, there remain surprisingly few monograph-length studies of the period between the coup and the revolution. Two of the best remain excellent introductions despite their age, but, having been written over 25 years ago, suffer slightly from their lack of access to important classified documents.[26]

More recently, historians have begun to turn their attention to the Iran policies of Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. While these historians have shed light on the significance of bureaucratic disputes,[27] arms sales,[28] psychological factors,[29] and Washington's emphasis on stability,[30] they have tended to treat their subjects in isolation, focusing on just one president at a time. By examining US policy towards Iran through the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations, this book tracks the evolution of the US–Iranian relationship over the years between JFK's inauguration in 1961 and Nixon's visit to Tehran in May 1972. Taking a longer view of US–Iranian relations reveals the remarkably high level of continuity evident in American policy. The conventional narrative – of Kennedy as the modernizing reformist, Johnson as the Shah's friend and supporter, and Nixon as transforming United States policy towards Iran – belies the fact that the policies of these presidents shared a number of key features.[31]

As has already been noted, each administration experienced internal disputes over the extent to which Washington should push Tehran towards reform and development. External factors also played a considerable role in determining US–Iranian relations. As Iran's income from its vast oil reserves increased as the decade progressed, the Shah's independence from American advice also grew. Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon were each forced to face the prospect of an Iranian monarch growing in confidence, determined not only to pursue his own version of modernization but to stamp his own mark on Iranian history. For US officials, the decline in American influence over Tehran engendered a strong urgency to maintain close ties with the Shah to reassure him of Washington's goodwill at the same time as making concessions on the question of arms sales.

Moreover, the common view that Richard Nixon's fondness for the Shah ushered in a revolutionary policy towards Iran in May 1972 is a misleading one as it fails to note the continuity in the Iran policies of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations. The changes that occurred between 1961 and 1972 were evolutionary, not revolutionary. Throughout this period, US policy was based on the assumption that the Shah was the best – and for most policymakers, the only – option in Iran. Both Johnson and Nixon adopted and expanded Kennedy's

policy of placating the Shah. LBJ, responding to Washington's increasing reliance on the Shah that had begun under Kennedy, extended large amounts of military credit to Tehran to fulfill the Shah's desires for a strong military. Nixon's decision to sell Iran any military equipment, excluding nuclear weaponry, was not so much revolutionary as it was an extension of Johnson's arms sales policy.

As Odd Arne Westad argues in his seminal book, *The Global Cold War,* the bipolar conflict was contested, not only in the European "centre," but in all corners of the world. According to Westad, "the most important aspects of the Cold War were neither military nor strategic, nor Europe-centered, but connected to political and social development in the Third World."[32] The Third World was simultaneously a site of American, as well as Soviet, intervention and local resistance and revolution. As one of Washington's closest – and comparatively stable – allies in the turbulent Middle East, Iran offers a unique case study of how developing countries were able to negotiate the role and influence of US intervention. Matthew Connelly has shown in his work on the Algerian struggle for independence that throughout the Cold War local actors "could be authors of their own history."[33] Close analysis of US policy towards Iran in the 1960s reveals the impact of Iranian agency in shaping the nature of the relationship between Washington and Tehran. Increasingly, the Shah was independent from the influence of the United States and was, in fact, able to successfully assert his own agenda. Describing the Shah's vision of modernity, Richard Cottam has written that "grandeur was the foremost motive giving direction to his domestic and foreign policies. But it was a grandeur blended of nation, dynasty, and self that was ultimately intensely personal."[34] The Shah's determination to push his own model of modernization, which comprised expansive military purchases, grand showpiece development projects, and even limited engagement with the Soviet Union, demonstrated the significance of Iranian – not American – ideas about development in US–Iranian relations.[35]

The rapid decline in modernization theory's influence over US policy meant that Washington, eager to maintain a close relationship with the Shah, accepted his version of development. Washington's reliance on Tehran for its security goals in the Persian Gulf, further amplified by Britain's decision to withdraw from the region towards the end of the decade, created a situation whereby the Shah was increasingly able to determine the tone of US–Iranian relations. As the 1960s progressed, the United States increasingly found itself adapting itself to the Shah's position on questions of modernization and arms sales.

* * *

In order to have the scope to analyse the evolution of US–Iranian relations between 1961 and 1972, the book is divided into seven chapters. While it adopts a chronological structure, it is also arranged along thematic lines, with each chapter examining a separate aspect or facet of US policy towards, and relations with, Iran.

The first chapter outlines the importance of Iran in Washington's Cold War strategy and its relationship to the emerging views of modernization that emanated from American universities in the 1950s. Iran's location on the border of the Soviet Union and its vast oil reserves ensured US officials considered it a vital component in their policies of containment. Questions of development had long been integral to Iran's political and social history, with the United States playing a minor role until the Eisenhower administration greatly expanded American interest in the country.

The remaining six chapters analyse the policies of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, forming the core of the book. Chapters 2 and 3 examine John F. Kennedy's policies towards Iran at a time of great upheaval in the Iranian political scene. Concerned by the country's instability, the Kennedy administration struggled to reconcile its stated aim of pursuing development in the Third World with its strategic need for a stable Iran. Chapter 2 looks at the internal disputes between the American embassy in Tehran and members of the National Security Council staff over the extent to which the US should pressure the Shah on issues of reform and development. The clash between NSC staff member Robert Komer and ambassador to Iran Julius C. Holmes reflected the conflict between pursuing modernization and emphasizing America's security interests, which contributed to an incoherent approach towards Iran that ultimately favoured stability over development.

The third chapter details the consensus that evolved inside Washington on the need to maintain close ties with the Shah through the use of a so-called "massage policy." Ongoing debates about the relative importance of modernization in US policy towards Iran were overshadowed by the administration's embrace of the Shah through policies designed to flatter his ego and bind him closer to the United States. This chapter examines three case studies – the referendum on the Shah's White Revolution, a border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Tehran's attempt to join the United Nations Security Council – to demonstrate that Kennedy, despite his personal antipathy regarding the Shah, prioritized closer ties with the Pahlavi regime, neglected development issues,

and missed opportunities for pursuing a modernization-centric course in Iran.

The following three chapters examine the declining influence of modernization in US policy towards Iran, Tehran's increasing independence from Washington, and the shift towards an acceptance of the Shah's vision of modernity during the Johnson administration. Chapter 4 looks at the juxtaposition of the phenomenon of politically active Iranian students living in America and the political fallout resulting from the negotiation of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in 1964 for American personnel in Iran. Far from being able to assert American control over Tehran, Johnson's inability to silence Iranian opposition voices within the United States forced Washington to placate the Shah on a number of issues, principally regarding the question of arms sales to Iran.

Chapters 5 and 6 analyse how international and regional developments affected US–Iranian relations during the Johnson administration. As Iran's oil income increased in the mid-1960s, so too did the Shah's independence from Washington. With modernization a diminishing force in influencing US policy towards Iran, American policymakers adapted to the Shah's version of development by emphasizing the extension of military credit to Iran as a means of maintaining a close relationship with the Shah. Chapter 5 examines the negative impact of the Vietnam War and the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War on US–Iranian relations. Iran was one of the few Third World countries to support LBJ's war in Vietnam, which gave Tehran leverage over Washington in arms sales negotiations. In contrast, the Indo-Pakistan War strained US–Iranian relations, as the Shah feared that if Iran was ever embroiled in a regional conflict the United States would cut military supplies to him as it had to Pakistan. However, the Shah adeptly exploited both conflicts to extract a $200 million credit deal from the US in 1966 – the second in just two years.

Chapter 6 assesses the role that the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 and Britain's decision to withdraw from the Persian Gulf had in propelling the Shah towards a more assertive foreign policy. Although modernization remained an important concept in guiding the thinking of US policymakers, these regional developments compounded the pattern that had evolved throughout the 1960s by ensuring issues of stability superseded questions of development. By maintaining a good relationship with Israel even in the aftermath of the Six-Day War and by positioning himself as the only viable prospect for a regional policeman, the Shah offered to step into the vacuum that Britain's withdrawal would

create. In light of these issues, the balance of the US–Iranian relationship swung firmly in favour of Iran; although the smaller partner, the Shah was increasingly independent from American influence, while Washington relied increasingly on Tehran to pursue its national security goals in the region. The closure of the US Agency for International Aid office in Tehran and the ending of economic assistance signalled the symbolic termination of modernization in US policy towards Iran even while its practical implementation had already been sidelined.

Finally, Chapter 7 looks beyond the Kennedy and Johnson years to the policy adjustments that occurred in the first three years of Richard Nixon's tenure in the White House. It culminates in Nixon's visit to Tehran in May 1972, when he lifted all restraints on arms sales to Iran and offered the Shah a "blank cheque" to allow him to purchase any non-nuclear military equipment from the United States. This chapter offers a corrective to the prevailing literature, which portrays the early Nixon era of US–Iranian relations as markedly different to that of his predecessors. It argues that the application of the Nixon Doctrine to Iran was not a "transformation" in US policy at all; in fact, it was merely the logical extension of the policies of Lyndon Johnson, which had, in turn, been built upon those of John F. Kennedy. Rather than an expression of Nixon's fondness for the Shah, the May 1972 deal was recognition of the diminished influence the United States now had over Iran.

Although Nixon's visit to Tehran effectively slammed the door shut on modernization's influence over US policy, its influence had, in fact, been declining since the Kennedy years as policymakers increasingly favoured stability over development. Indeed, it encapsulated the reality that although modernization was no longer a driving force of US policy – if it had ever been – Washington had come to accept the Shah's own ideas about Iranian development, which centred primarily upon producing an effective military to ensure Iran's security.

Washington's intimate relationship with the undemocratic and repressive regime of the Shah of Iran was a prime example of the kind of short-sighted Cold War foreign policy that the United States has long been criticized for.[36] By focusing on perennial Cold War concerns regarding Soviet expansionism and maintaining access to oil, successive US governments prioritized national security and Iranian stability over political development and neglected serious humanitarian issues. Such policies saw the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations forge closer ties with Tehran, binding Washington's fortunes to those of the Shah; this evolution of US–Iranian relations came to haunt US policymakers and

the American public when the Pahlavi dynasty was overthrown in an overtly anti-American revolution in 1979. The patterns that would come to dominate US–Iranian relations in the 1960s took shape in the period leading up to Kennedy's assumption of the presidency, when debates about competing visions of modernity started to become more febrile, and, in the crucible of the Cold War, more strategically vital.

1
Modernization Theory and the United States Meets Iran

In the autumn of 1931, aged just 15 years, a precociously talented student named Walt Whitman Rostow enrolled at the venerable Yale University. The son of Russian Jewish immigrant intellectuals, Rostow was named after the revered American poet Walt Whitman. While he would go on to complete his PhD at Yale, as well as spend a year at Oxford University's Balliol College as a Rhodes Scholar, Rostow later claimed that it was during his undergraduate days that he decided to write a "non-communist manifesto" to compete with that of Karl Marx's socialist *Das Kapital*.[1] The young economist firmly rejected Marx's version of history and turned his attention to formulating an explanatory model of the economic development of society to counter the appeal of Leninist communism.

After writing a number of articles and a co-authored book with another eminent economist, Max Millikan, on the subject of economic and social development, Rostow finally published his *magnum opus* in 1960.[2] *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* provided readers with a simple, easy-to-understand explanation of economic development that, in theory, would be applicable to all societies. Central to Rostow's thesis was his assertion that "[i]t is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high-mass consumption."[3] It was Rostow's belief that the United States embodied the final stage, the age of high-mass consumption, itself a rebuttal to Lenin's pejorative description of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. Once a society's position on this linear and universalist scale was identified, its development could be accelerated through the use of economic aid and technical assistance.

In some respects, Rostow's thesis represented the pinnacle of the emerging school of modernization theory that had come to dominate social science departments in American universities during the 1950s. Rostow was by no means the only academic to put forward a theory of modernization in this period, nor perhaps was it even the most scholarly rigorous. Indeed, there is a danger that Rostow's "elevation to the symbolic head of the [modernization theory] movement" has led to the widespread misconception that modernization theory focused solely on economic development.[4] Even so, as Nils Gilman acknowledges, because Rostow's work was easily digested by policymakers and the public, he had a prominent role in advocating its use in US foreign policy.[5] As the Cold War moved increasingly away from the traditional Western European centres of power to Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East during the 1950s, modernization theory appeared to offer both explanations of, and solutions to, the problems that faced the United States in the developing world.

Rostow has since become synonymous with modernization theory in a way that few of his contemporaries managed. This is in no small part due to his role as a leading proponent of modernization in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, in spite – or perhaps because – of the murky reputation both he and modernization acquired during the Vietnam War.[6] JFK in particular embraced the theory of modernization espoused by Rostow, employing him as a foreign policy advisor first during his presidential campaign and then later in key positions within his administration. It is little wonder, then, that the Kennedy years are typically seen as representing the high-water mark of modernization in US foreign policy.[7] However, as this book will demonstrate, the prevailing periodization of modernization as a primarily Cold War concept that reached its height during the Kennedy administration is misleading for three reasons.

Firstly, as historians are increasingly acknowledging, issues of development have had a long history in America's relations with the wider world.[8] Secondly, in the case of US–Iranian relations, development had played an important role for much of the 20th century in various ways, from the early work of Christian missionaries to the operations of philanthropic NGOs in the 1950s. Finally, the story of modernization in US–Iranian relations does not unfold in the ways that one might expect during the Kennedy and Johnson years, despite the prominence traditional accounts of the era have given it. Rather than being the driving force of Washington's policies towards Tehran, modernization is frequently sidelined in the 1960s as US officials pursued national security

interests and sought to maintain a close relationship with the Shah of Iran.

Modernization Theory and Its Origins

Conventional accounts of the Eisenhower administration have emphasized its concern with Washington's credibility in the bipolar conflict and its geostrategic pragmatism regarding developing countries. Such accounts tend to downplay the role that development had in Eisenhower's approach to the Third World, which more recent scholarship has begun to highlight.[9] While John F. Kennedy would later call upon the United States to produce a "decade of development" in the 1960s, the origins of his developmental rhetoric can be found in the 1950s. Michael Adamson has shown that although the Eisenhower administration was "ambivalent about foreign aid as an engine of development" it was willing to utilize aid as a short-term, emergency measure to bolster economies in order to "address an immediate security threat."[10] Elsewhere, historians have identified in Eisenhower's policies towards Latin America the genesis of the Alliance for Progress, the centrepiece of the Kennedy administration's development ideals.[11]

Eisenhower's years in office coincided with the rise of numerous theories of modernization that sought to understand the problems facing development in the Third World. Modernization theory in the United States as understood by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations was born in the post-war social science departments of a number of leading American universities. Although there were various forms of modernization theory, Nick Cullather points out that one can see "at the core…an assumption of *convergence*, that there is one best form of political economy and that all states are moving toward it."[12] Nils Gilman has suggested that the nascent forms of modernization theory developed at east coast academic institutions were designed to help the United States better understand "the monumental problems that Third World countries faced," which required "an equally enormous theoretical apparatus."[13] Although the schools of thought to which Rostow and other Kennedy policymakers belonged sprang up in the 1950s, historians such as David Ekbladh and Michael Adas have traced the long history of American modernization back to at least the beginning of the 20th century.

Ekbladh has noted "the rise of an American style of development" between the two world wars, which sought to resolve the economic crises of the Great Depression era and then later to act as a bulwark against expanding totalitarianism in Europe.[14] Although "the concept

of development has no clear beginning in the U.S. case," according to Ekbladh, the 1930s saw "a vital new formulation [of development] crystallized. This shift was critical in reshaping thinking, policy, and action on development in ways that continue to resonate in the present."[15] In turn, Adas has noted the civilizing impulses that propelled early forms of thinking and action on development, particularly during the 19th and early 20th centuries, which most notably found expression in the American occupation of the Philippines.[16] This gave way to a reverence for the use of science and technology as means of accelerating development.[17] The expansive work in the pre-Cold War era of development policy activists such as David Lilienthal, whose enormous hydro-electric and agricultural Tennessee Valley Authority rapidly modernized great swathes of the American South, provided templates and inspiration for the scholars and policymakers who took up the mantle of modernization in the 1950s and 1960s.[18]

For many Iranians, their first experience of Americans was largely through the work of Christian missionaries, whose work, in addition to their religious evangelizing, involved small-scale local development projects. As Kamyar Ghaneabassiri notes, "These missionaries…labored in Persia to improve the educational, medical, and social conditions of the country, and so earned the affection and admiration of Persians for Americans and, in turn, for the United States."[19] Their immediate goals of converting and educating the Iranian people acted alongside the intention to facilitate the creation of a "Christian, scientific, vigorous, cooperative, and democratic" nation.[20] Alongside this missionary intervention, two prominent American financial experts, Morgan Shuster and Arthur C. Millspaugh, were given extensive powers by Tehran to help modernize Iran's financial system, especially its taxes and foreign investment. Although the efforts of Shuster and Millspaugh proved less than successful, their experiences illustrated the long history of American involvement in Iranian development.[21]

By the 1920s, American oil companies also began to explore opportunities in Iran. Although the British dominated Iran's oil market through the Anglo–Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), American companies engaged with Iranian development and politics in complex – and at times problematic – ways.[22] Indeed, the reign of Reza Shah in the inter-war years was marked by his determined efforts to enact a number of development programmes in order to modernize and Westernize Iran.[23] Like his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi born in 1919, Reza Shah's concept of modernization rested upon the support of the Iranian military.[24] Historian Ali Ansari has observed that Reza Shah "became king on the twin

pillars of tradition and nationalism while at the same time purporting to be a force for modernization."[25] Reza Shah pushed Iran down the road of development whilst constructing a form of nationalism designed to create loyalty to the Pahlavi dynasty.

During the 1950s, American social scientists increasingly turned their attention to this question of how societies develop. Scholars researching development issues began to view modernization theory in grandiose terms, positing it as the most viable paradigm for understanding the development of all world societies. As one political scientist put it, modernization theory "augured the secular deliverance not just of the discipline but of mankind itself."[26] Much of the work needed to turn modernization theory from a scholarly pursuit into a "foreign policy doctrine" applicable to the problems facing the United States in the Cold War was done at the Centre for International Studies (CIS) at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT). Like the Harvard Department of Social Relations (DSR), the CIS was an invaluable breeding ground for modernization theorists intent on applying their research to the practicalities of US foreign policy. A number of highly respected social science scholars, including Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, Lucian Pye, and Daniel Lerner, worked together to form the intellectual backbone of the CIS.[27] Worried by the apparent appeal in the early Cold War of Soviet-style development methodologies, namely communist ideology achieved through centralized planning, Washington hoped institutions such as the CIS would provide viable alternatives that could be used to compete with the Soviet Union in the development field.[28]

Although modernization theory did not receive the widespread acceptance in the Eisenhower administration that it later did among Kennedy's officials, elements of modernization were to be found in US foreign policy during the 1950s. In Iran's case, private institutions intersected with Washington's focus on Cold War security to spearhead American efforts at economic development.[29] Development pioneer David Lilienthal attempted to apply his experience implementing America's foremost beacon of development, the TVA, to the Khuzestan region of Iran by working alongside the Shah's Plan Organization.[30] Lilienthal strived to inject a dose of morality into the development discourse, seeing Iran as a case study that would help "preserve the New Deal's idealism and fasten it to US development aid."[31] In the end, the project was subverted by the Shah, who sought to assert Iranian control over Iranian development. Indeed, Lilienthal's failure to overcome the Shah's resistance to an American vision of modernity would be echoed during the Kennedy years when Washington sought to pressure Tehran towards reform. Even

so, Lilienthal's efforts were a bridge between the missionary impulses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the so-called "decade of development" of the Kennedy years.

Moreover, Lilienthal's experience in Iran demonstrated a reality of US–Iranian relations that would become increasingly apparent throughout the 1960s: Tehran's vision of modernization did not always match that of Washington. Victor Nemchenok has reinforced this truism by revealing how the Ford Foundation encountered difficulty in applying its version of development in rural Iran largely because Iranian officials differed on the methods and goals of modernization.[32] Nemchenok also astutely argues that successive "policymakers' quest for stability inadvertently undermined the Ford Foundation activities"; neither US nor Foundation officials, therefore, were able to reconcile the contradictions inherent in their competing goals of stability and security, on the one hand, and development on the other.[33] The inability to reconcile immediate security concerns with long-term modernization goals was a dominant feature of United States policy towards Iran throughout the 1960s.

The United States and Iran in the Post-War Period

Up until the Second World War, the United States had remained a relatively minor player in Iran. Great Britain and the Soviet Union were the two dominant external forces, both having enjoyed a long history of economic exploitation that resulted in a number of joint agreements recognizing the *de facto* division of Iran into spheres of influence.[34] During the war, American interests quickly expanded due to Iran's vast oil reserves, which led Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States to oust the last shah's father, Reza Shah, for his pro-German sympathies and jointly occupy the country to prevent it falling into the hands of the Axis powers.[35] While for Washington defeating Nazi Germany certainly took precedence over any consideration of confronting Moscow, "most members of the State Department saw a need to contain possible postwar Soviet expansionism."[36] With its firm links with Western oil companies, Iran had become an increasingly important state in American eyes as the question of access to oil for the sustainability of Western economies intersected with the strategy of containment. Indeed, the historian Mark Lytle has identified four key factors that guided US interests in Iran at this time: "the desire for secure Middle Eastern oil reserves, the State Department's efforts to incorporate Iran into a new conception of American security, the department's long-term efforts to contain the Soviet Union, and the faith in American exceptionalism."[37]

Given the strategic significance of Iran, the young Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi experienced a true "baptism by fire" during his first few years on the throne.[38] To avoid future conflict, Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States agreed to withdraw their troops from the country within six months of the end of the war. Iran became an early site of confrontation in the emerging Cold War between Washington and Moscow as the Soviets refused to leave the country, supporting the socialist Azerbaijan Democratic Party's move to declare independence from Tehran. [39] The Soviets were also keen to maximize their presence in the area in order to access the untapped oil resources in northern Iran.[40] As historian Galia Golan writes, Moscow's policy towards Iran "was clearly an effort to expand Soviet influence on its periphery."[41]

Ronald McLaurin has argued that Stalin's post-war foreign policy had two chief goals: "(1) rebuilding the Soviet economy and (2) safeguarding Soviet security through (a) consolidation in Eastern Europe, (b) development of conventional and nuclear strategic power, (c) establishment of Soviet influence in border areas not under Moscow's control, and (d) above, all, prevention of the outbreak of a general war with the United States."[42] Indeed, throughout the Cold War, Soviet policy towards the so-called Northern Tier states – Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan – was "dictated primarily by regard for border security and for ideology."[43] US policymakers believed Moscow to be set on a policy of subversion in Iran designed to undermine the Pahlavi regime and thereby American influence in the region. Even so, as Lytle has pointed out, while "the Iranian crisis confirmed many Americans' worst fears about the Soviet Union, Iran was not the place or the issue over which the Truman administration was prepared to force a showdown."[44]

Washington's ability, therefore, to persuade – or force – Moscow into withdrawing its troops was severely limited. In the end, it was the shrewd diplomacy of the recently appointed Iranian prime minister, Ahmad Qavam, that resolved the crisis. In April, Qavam persuaded the Soviets to withdraw in exchange for a lucrative oil concession in northern Iran. As soon as the Soviet forces left, Tehran moved quickly to quell the separatist movement in Azerbaijan. Qavam's triumph was complete when in October 1947 the *majlis* voted, at last, on whether to approve the oil concession to the USSR. In a striking validation of the prime minister's astute handling of the Soviet Union, the *majlis* rejected the concession by 100 votes to zero (and two abstentions).[45]

Despite Qavam's success, by the early 1950s the monopolization of Iran's most precious natural resource by the Anglo–Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) was considered the clearest and most blatant affront to Iranian

nationalism and pride. Under the leadership of the charismatic, influential, and experienced politician Mohammed Mossadeq, the National Front, a loose coalition of mostly liberal, secular, and leftist groups, enflamed popular opinion by setting its target on nationalizing the British company.[46] Mossadeq's election as prime minister in April 1951 was a major triumph for the National Front and the nationalization movement and had a profound impact on Iranian politics and US policy.[47]

The British government owned 50 per cent of the AIOC and feared that any sign of retreat in the face of Iranian nationalism would set a precedent jeopardizing British commercial interests elsewhere. In contrast to Britain's "firm and uncompromising" position, the United States initially sought a "workable compromise" whereby both Tehran and London might be satisfied.[48] The Truman administration was concerned that prolonged tension between Britain and Iran might cause an economic crisis that would leave Iran vulnerable to Soviet encroachment.[49] Mary Ann Heiss has argued that by the end of 1951, however, American officials were increasingly frustrated by what they considered Mossadeq's intransigence, which was exacerbated by their gendered orientalist assessments of him as "inferior, childlike, and feminine."[50] For the United States, the most immediate danger was that the wily prime minister would "wreck Iran's economy, push that country toward communism, and open the door to Soviet expansion."[51]

Mossadeq's announcement in March 1952 that he would circumvent the British boycott by selling oil to any willing customers, including communist countries, rang alarm bells in both London and Washington.[52] Despite his huge popularity, Mossadeq's use of suspiciously authoritarian methods, alleged communist sympathies, and stubbornness regarding the oil issue galvanized Washington's opposition to his government.[53] Traditional accounts of the nationalization crisis suggest that although the Truman administration had by late 1952 begun to distance itself from the neutral path it had sought to tread between Tehran and the AIOC, Washington's policy shifted markedly when Eisenhower entered the White House.[54] Nowhere was this difference more starkly expressed than in Eisenhower's willingness to consider covert operations to oust Mossadeq from office. While British efforts to gain American support for a coup had always been met with firm resistance by the Truman administration, the idea of toppling Mossadeq was enthusiastically embraced by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, director of the CIA, Allen Dulles.

On coming into office, Eisenhower had presented the American public with the promise of a vigorous anti-communist foreign policy; rather

than merely containing the Soviet Union, the president and John Foster Dulles articulated a more aggressive strategy that would "rollback" communism and "liberate" areas that had fallen beneath its yoke.[55] Central to the new administration was an attempt to regain the "initiative" in the Cold War through its New Look foreign policy.[56] While the New Look included an emphasis on the role that America's nuclear weapons could play in its dealings with the Soviet Union, it "postulated that the United States would use all its strength – not only military means, but also covert operations, foreign military aid, the armed forces of its allies, and cold war diplomacy." As Saki Dockrill notes, it was believed that "covert operations and intelligence gathering were areas in which the United States could challenge the enemy in its own coin."[57]

The change in US policy was underscored by Eisenhower's rejection of a request for emergency aid sent by Mossadeq on 28 May 1953.[58] Washington was increasingly concerned that the deteriorating economic situation and Mossadeq's apparent reliance on the communist Tudeh Party would create opportunities for communist subversion, and on 11 July, Eisenhower and Dulles gave their final approval for a CIA coup to remove the prime minister.[59] The CIA operation was led by Kermit Roosevelt, a grandson of former president Theodore Roosevelt, who utilized earlier British plans as well as a network of local agents that had been studiously cultivated by MI-6.[60] The plotters also colluded with General Fazlollah Zahedi, who would replace Mossadeq as prime minister, and Ayatollah Mostafa Kashani, a former ally of Mossadeq whose large following among the religious working classes proved vital to the coup's success. The Shah meanwhile reluctantly signed a royal *firman,* dismissing Mossadeq, and then, fearing that the plan would fail, immediately fled the country.

After an initial abortive attempt, the pivotal moment came when the American ambassador, Loy Henderson, persuaded Mossadeq to order the security forces to restore order on the streets by confronting the CIA-funded crowds that were masquerading as Tudeh supporters, who were quickly joined by actual Tudeh members. On 19 August, when anti-Mossadeq protests spread across Tehran, neither the National Front nor the Tudeh, who resented the police crackdown, were on the streets to oppose them. A battle at the prime minister's home between army units backing Zahedi and those who remained loyal to Mossadeq lasted all day, resulting in at least 200 deaths. Forced to escape by fleeing over the rooftops, Mossadeq was arrested the following day as the Shah returned to the country to appoint Zahedi as prime minister.[61]

For Eisenhower, the Dulles brothers, and Roosevelt, the coup was an unadulterated triumph. At least for John Foster Dulles, the events of

August 1953 – or the 28 Mordad coup, as it is known in Iran – were a model of covert operation that could be applied elsewhere in the global confrontation with communism.[62] The real lessons of 1953, however, were less rose coloured. First, the defining feature of the coup was not how easy it was to implement, but rather how close it came to failure when Mossadeq got wind of the attempt to remove him, forcing Zahedi to go into hiding and the Shah to flee the country. Second, although the role of the United States was instrumental in determining how the coup ultimately played out, Iranian actors were also vital to its success. Third, whilst the coup may have achieved its immediate aims of removing Mossadeq from power, it served to undermine US policy in the long run as it helped foster anti-American sentiment inside Iran over the next two decades. Fourth, it set in motion a series of policies that irrevocably tightened the relationship between Washington and the Pahlavi regime. Within weeks of Zahedi's appointment as prime minister, Eisenhower authorized emergency aid worth $45 million – the same aid that he had denied Mossadeq in July.[63] The following year, the Eisenhower administration supported the Zahedi government – and therefore the Pahlavi regime – with $85 million of "mutual security and technical assistance programme funds"; an additional $149 million was given in 1955 and 1956.[64] US moral and material assistance was instrumental in establishing the foundations of the Zahedi government and contributed to an evolving client-sponsor relationship between Tehran and Washington.[65]

As for Iran's oil, it was agreed in October 1954 that the profits would be divided on a 50:50 basis between the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and an international consortium of oil companies. The NIOC retained nominal ownership of the country's oil industry assets, while the consortium would operate and manage the extraction and distribution process. Signalling the diminished British and amplified American interests in Iran, the AIOC's stake in the consortium was 40 per cent, while the five major US oil companies shared 35 per cent. The remaining 25 per cent was granted to Royal Dutch-Shell (14 per cent), Compagnie Francaise des Petroles (6 per cent), and nine smaller independent American companies who shared 5 per cent.[66]

The deal conceded $25 million worth of compensation from Iran to the AIOC, far lower than the British had demanded. Iran, meanwhile, gained a dramatic increase in oil revenue compared to the nominal payments it had received in royalties during the AIOC's heyday; during the next three years, Tehran received over $500 million from the consortium's operations.[67] The arrangement obviously did not go as far as nationalization would have if it had not been undermined, but it was

a significant boost to the Iranian economy given the downturn experienced since the British oil boycott. Although the country's economic situation was not yet fully resolved, the Shah planned to direct 60 to 80 per cent of the oil income to the Second Seven Year Plan's development programmes.[68]

In a departure from Mossadeq's efforts to pursue a neutral stance in the Cold War conflict, the Shah embraced closer ties with Washington, placing Iran firmly in the Western camp. As eminent Iranian historian Rouhollah Ramazani has written, for the Shah, "Iran's national security was inseparable from domestic security, and domestic security was in turn intertwined with the security of his regime and the Pahlavi dynasty."[69] He rejected Mossadeq's theory of "negative equilibrium," whereby Tehran sought to play the two Cold War camps off each other, and adopted a more traditional Iranian foreign policy, which became known as "positive nationalism." Thinking that the United States would join the Baghdad Pact alongside Britain, Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkey, the Shah announced that Iran would also become a member of the regional security arrangement in 1955.[70] However, the Eisenhower administration never officially joined on the grounds that America's presence in the Pact would actually cause more problems in the region than it would solve, much to the Shah's chagrin. Even so, the Baghdad Pact, which became the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) following Iraq's withdrawal in 1958, remained a reminder of Washington's strategic interests in the region as it sought to defend the so-called "northern tier" from Soviet encroachment. Although Tehran would have preferred the United States to join CENTO, the Shah endorsed the Eisenhower Doctrine, which stated that the United States would provide economic and military assistance, as well as direct military support, to any Middle Eastern nation deemed under threat from communism.[71]

Throughout the late 1950s, cooperation between the United States and Iran continued to expand. In 1957, the CIA assisted the Shah in creating SAVAK, Iran's feared intelligence and security agency.[72] SAVAK operated as the Shah's secret police, subverting domestic and international opposition groups, gathering intelligence, and arresting and torturing critics of the regime. It soon became one of the key pillars upon which the Pahlavi dynasty rested, alongside the military and Iran's oil income.[73] The ties between Washington and Tehran were further strengthened in March 1959 by the signing of a bilateral alliance. The agreement guaranteed that the United States viewed "as 'vital to its national interest' Iran's independence and integrity and undertook (1) to furnish Iran military and economic assistance, and, more importantly, (2) to come to Iran's

assistance in case of aggression."[74] The agreement was welcomed in Washington as it solidified its alliance with a strategically situated oil-rich country that contributed to the containment of the Soviet Union.

For the Shah, the agreement validated his assumption that Iran's military was central to the country's security, thereby opening the door to greater military assistance from America and increased opportunities for arms purchases. Between 1953 and 1961, the United States extended $436 million of military assistance, compared to $16.7 million in 1949–52. As it would throughout his reign, the Shah's obsession with improving Iran's military capabilities took centre stage in his discussions with US officials.[75] Iran's significance in American eyes was illustrated by the fact that between 1954 and 1961 Iran received a higher yearly average of US military aid than the whole of Latin America.[76] Economic assistance also increased at a rapid rate, from $16.5 million for the period of 1949–52 to $611 million between 1953 and 1961, $345 million of which was grant aid.[77] The Eisenhower administration sought to use economic and military aid to ensure the security and stability of the country. The year 1957 was a turning point for US–Iranian relations as the scale of military grants overtook that of economic grants for the first time. In 1956, the US had provided $23 million in military grants and $62.3 million in economic grants; in the following two years those figures had changed to $82.5 million and $33 million respectively.[78] US officials believed that supporting the Shah's regime and bolstering the military were the key means of maintaining Iran's internal stability. For the United States, Iran's stability was not only an integral element of the strategy of containment designed to prevent Soviet encroachment into the Middle East, it was also vital in order to secure Western access to the country's vast oil reserves. The pattern of emphasizing national security issues, that is Iranian stability, ahead of serious considerations of Iranian modernization that established itself during the post-war years continued into the Kennedy era.

Conclusion

The post-war years saw the tightening of relations between the United States and Iran. The emerging theories of modernization that were to gain influence within the Kennedy administration seemed to be well suited to the problems that the United States faced in Iran. Ironically though, the president who is most associated with modernization theory did not oversee a period of US–Iranian relations in which Washington placed issues of development at the top of its list of priorities. Indeed,

the conventional modernization narrative that one might expect to find when examining Kennedy's relations with Iran is far more complicated than a simple matter of New Frontier officials promoting economic and political development as the best means of achieving US interests in the area. Although the history of US engagement with Iran had a long tradition of American interest in Iranian development – from Christian missionaries and financial advisers to oil companies and philanthropic foundations – the Kennedy years saw Washington emphasize stability over development. As the following chapters demonstrate, the decline in modernization's influence over US policy began while JFK was still in the White House. A combination of bureaucratic disputes over modernization's efficacy during the first half of the Kennedy administration contributed to Washington adopting a largely incoherent and ineffective set of policies towards Iran that saw the United States ultimately seek closer ties to the Shah.

2
The Kennedy Administration, Internal Disputes, and Modernization

John F. Kennedy had barely settled into the Oval Office when he was forced to consider US policy towards Iran, a country in increasing turmoil. In February 1961, Iran held its second nationwide election in just seven months. Widespread accusations of fraud led to riots, strikes, and protests, which in turn were followed by a severe police crackdown.[1] In Washington, the chaos emanating from Tehran provided apparent confirmation of Nikita Khrushchev's view that it was only a matter of time before Iran collapsed, precipitating a communist takeover.[2] In fact, despite American fears that Moscow would seek to subvert the government in Tehran in order to expand its influence into the Middle East, Iran was rarely very high on the Soviet agenda. The 1946 Azerbaijan crisis and the communist spectre during the nationalization crisis had caused US officials to exaggerate the Soviet threat to Iran. Certainly, Moscow engaged for many years in an extensive anti-Shah propaganda campaign, but the Soviet Union's priorities lay elsewhere.[3] Even so, the prospect of Iran descending further into chaos and collapse was deeply concerning for US officials.

Tehran was further shaken just three months later by a large-scale teachers' strike that escalated into a student-supported riot. In response to the growing dissatisfaction, the Shah of Iran reluctantly appointed Ali Amini as prime minister.[4] Amini, an experienced reformist politician, embarked on a series of development-minded programmes that would ultimately become the foundation for the Shah's so-called White Revolution. Amini's brief time in office would be defined and ultimately brought to a close by the power struggles between himself and the Shah. Over 5,000 miles away, Washington policy towards Iran was also marked by serious internal divisions. Bureaucratic tensions arose over the question of modernization, which JFK had made a central feature of his

approach to the Third World during the presidential election. Building on the research of American social scientists, the Kennedy administration championed a containment strategy that depicted modernization theory as the most effective means of accelerating the development – and therefore the resilience – of countries exposed to communist encroachment and political instability. Iran's long border with the Soviet Union, precarious political balance, and weak economy made it a prime candidate for modernization theory in action.

However, deep bureaucratic tensions existed inside the Kennedy administration over whether the United States should promote modernization or simply prioritize stability through a close relationship with the Shah.[5] This chapter examines the dispute between Ambassador Julius C. Holmes and Robert Komer of the National Security Council staff as a case study emblematic of the diverging views held by different US officials regarding modernization and Iran. Holmes advocated a cautious approach to development issues, arguing that overt American pressure towards reform would jeopardize, rather than cultivate, Washington's relationship with the Shah. In contrast, Komer pushed for a more vigorous policy of pressuring the Shah to adopt a modernization programme designed to encourage economic development. The persistent tension between Holmes and Komer reflected the internal differences within the Kennedy administration concerning the role and applicability of modernization theory in its relations with Iran, which were highlighted by the difficulty JFK had in finding a coherent approach towards Iran.

This chapter evaluates the Kennedy administration's relations with Iran up until the resignation of Prime Minister Ali Amini in July 1962 to demonstrate that tensions revolved around the varying levels of faith different officials placed in modernization as the most appropriate paradigm for viewing Iran. It then discusses how and why Kennedy officials adopted modernization theory and incorporated it into their strategic thinking and approach to the problems of the Cold War. Although there was widespread acceptance of the basic tenets of modernization as an explanation of history, in the case of Iran it rarely determined the overall thrust of Kennedy's policy. The remainder of the chapter analyses the dispute between Holmes and Komer as a case study of the strategic conflicts inherent within the administration. The tension that arose between the different approaches advocated by these two officials was indicative of the disharmony within the Kennedy administration and contributed to the formulation of an incoherent set of policies to deal with Iran. Moreover, the clashes between Komer and Holmes undermined modernization as a driving force of US policy towards Iran.

Consensus and Disharmony

Much of the literature concerning US–Iranian relations during the Kennedy period hinges upon two major issues. The first is that during these three years relations between Washington and Tehran were not as close as they were during the preceding Eisenhower or later Johnson and Nixon administrations. Dwight Eisenhower had ushered in an era of strong ties with the Shah of Iran, initially by restoring the monarch to the throne through the 1953 coup and then by consolidating his regime using economic and military assistance. In stark contrast to Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, both of whom are said to have been fond of the Shah, the prevailing view that Kennedy's relationship with the Shah was less than amicable has been reinforced by the two men's own opinions of each other.

It is generally accepted that JFK viewed the Shah with some measure of disdain, "whom he considered a corrupt and petty tyrant."[6] The Shah, in turn, was troubled by this new, young president, whose revolutionary rhetoric he feared might easily be directed at Third World autocratic monarchies such as Iran's. It was well known that the Shah preferred Kennedy's presidential rival, Richard Nixon, with many Iranians believing that the Shah made significant contributions to Nixon's campaign in 1960.[7] Moreover, the Kennedy years are generally seen as "an interlude of reform," to use esteemed Iran scholar James Bill's phrase.[8] The implication is that American pressure coerced the Shah into introducing a series of social and economic reforms. Bill asserts that "there is little doubt that during the Kennedy presidency the United States pressured the Shah's regime to begin a program of dramatic, selective and controlled reforms."[9] The inference of Bill's phrase – "an interlude of reform" – is that the Kennedy era marked a clear break from previous and later patterns in US–Iranian relations. That is to say, the Kennedy administration's reform-minded policies towards the Shah were sandwiched between the more supportive and cooperative policies of the Eisenhower and Johnson administrations. The fact that the Shah resented the Kennedy administration's pressure towards reform has meant US–Iranian relations in this period are seen to be typified by a pervasive coolness.

In the following chapter it will be argued that by focusing on the antipathy between Kennedy and the Shah, and the tensions produced by American pressure for reform, historians have ignored an important element of the relationship between Washington and Tehran in these years and the policies it gave rise to that frequently served to foster a

more positive atmosphere: the "massage problem." NSC staff member Robert Komer, when referring to the Shah's general need for reassurance, identified a massage problem that necessitated a policy of constant encouragement and ego stroking. This policy sought to ensure that official relations between the United States and Iran were kept on an even keel during the early 1960s and beyond.

The second major issue that historians have focused on – and the concern of this chapter – is the question of tensions between departments within the Kennedy administration. James Goode, for instance, has argued that Kennedy's policy of advocating political and economic reform was stymied by the diverging opinions held by officials within the State Department and members of the NSC staff. State Department officials such as Julius Holmes, John Bowling, and Dean Rusk, whom Goode calls "traditionalists," supported political and economic reform but were worried that pushing the Shah too hard on this front might damage ties with Iran; better therefore, they felt, to advise the Shah "through persistent but delicate inferences" to devote his attention to economic development.[10] Other officials, particularly McGeorge Bundy, Robert Komer, and Kenneth Hansen, felt that this amounted to little more than a "do-nothing approach" and advocated a firmer policy towards the Shah, pushing him more forcefully to implement reforms they saw as vital to his survival.[11] April Summitt has gone even further than Goode, suggesting that Kennedy missed an opportunity to bring order to Iran and the Middle East because "the conflicts between the State Department and the NSC made this important task difficult, if not impossible."[12]

This emphasis on bureaucratic division has been refuted by Victor Nemchenok, who has claimed that historians have made too much of minor disagreements between different departments. Nemchenok argues that in actual fact there was considerable consensus within the Kennedy administration concerning what he calls "the search for stability."[13] He also suggests that scholars have focused too closely on the question of political reform in Iran, which he argues "was a complement to economic development…Washington's preferred method of co-opting the anti-Shah opposition and stabilising Iran."[14] Nemchenok is correct to assert that there was consensus on the need for a stable Iran, a conclusion with which Goode and Summitt also concur.[15] Traditionalists within the State Department as well as Kennedy's inner circle all agreed on the desirability of an internally stable Iran.

Other historians have argued that Kennedy had a comprehensive plan designed to promote political development in Iran.[16] However,

this belies the tension within the Kennedy administration regarding the question of modernization. In fact, the defining feature of Kennedy's policy during 1961–62 was the significant division over how hard the United States should push the Shah towards economic and/or political reform, with traditionalists advocating a cautious advisory approach while NSC staff and the Agency for International Development called for a more vigorous policy. Where political stability was embraced across the administration, the principles behind modernization theory created clear divisions inside Washington.

Although it is important to note the consensus within the administration regarding stability, downplaying the bureaucratic tensions provides an incomplete picture of Kennedy's relations with Iran. By focusing on the agreed desire for a stable Iran, it is easy to overlook the intricacies of the Kennedy administration's policymaking that were illustrated by the bureaucratic tensions between the NSC staff and the State Department.[17] The disputes between Robert Komer and Julius Holmes were symptomatic of this division and in turn created an incoherence in US policy towards Iran regarding the extent to which Washington ought to push the Shah on questions of modernization.

The Kennedy Administration and Modernization Theory

When John F. Kennedy entered the White House in January 1961, he immediately set out to distance the new administration from that of his predecessor, Dwight Eisenhower. The newly elected president's election campaign had been built upon a strident critique of the foreign policies of Eisenhower and his influential secretary of state, John Foster Dulles.[18] In the mind of the American public, the Eisenhower administration had become too sluggish to wage the Cold War effectively. Ike, with his regular rounds of golf on the White House lawn, had come to epitomize the image of an inattentive foreign policy president for many Americans.[19] Kennedy "promised to replace Eisenhower's tired, bland leadership with new ideas and new approaches."[20]

Mindful of Eisenhower's reputation as an aging, stolid, and inactive chief executive, JFK portrayed himself as youthful, energetic, and dynamic; so much so, in fact, that the historian David Webster has commented that the Kennedy administration turned "activism into a fetish."[21] Those officials who made up JFK's inner circle shared their president's preferences, which was seen in the administration's embrace of modernization theory as a means of tackling development issues in the Third World. Modernization theory provided an easily digestible

explanation of the problems facing developing countries and offered solutions in the form of targeted foreign aid, technical advice, and the production of leadership networks.[22] However, the activism of these policymakers clashed with the comparatively cautious approach to foreign affairs preferred by many in the State Department and, in particular, the Tehran embassy. Indeed, even for Kennedy, the concept of modernization as an efficacious foreign policy framework largely played second fiddle to its role as a rhetorical device to distance himself from Eisenhower.

Central to Kennedy's vision for the incoming administration was the need to reorganize and reinvigorate the National Security Council to better suit his leadership style and aspirations.[23] Where the system under Eisenhower "had become bloated and unwieldy," the new, looser structure would, in theory, pay dividends "in terms of responsiveness and flexibility."[24] Although it made efforts to look different, the Kennedy administration maintained at its heart the foreign policy imperative that had governed US diplomacy in the post-war period, namely "that the American interest was not to remake the world, but to balance power within it."[25] Kennedy formulated a strategy known as "flexible response" by adapting Eisenhower's emphasis on the threat of nuclear retaliation and incorporating the use of local counter-insurgency forces, supported and trained by Washington, to respond to Soviet subversion.[26]

Alongside these counter-insurgency methods, implemented most clearly in South Vietnam, Kennedy officials saw economic development as a viable non-military counter-measure to prevent Soviet inroads in friendly nations. The influence of the scholar-cum-policymaker Walt Rostow is seen in the Kennedy administration's adoption of the fundamental aspects of his work on modernization theory.[27] It was assumed by many in the Kennedy administration that the United States could maintain its national security by guiding the economic and socio-political development of these Third World countries.[28] Nowhere was "this belief in its ability to 'manage' foreign societies" felt more strongly than among the architects and adherents of modernization theory who populated much of JFK's inner foreign policy circle.[29]

Rostow, who served as Kennedy's chairman of the Policy Planning Council, played a significant role in packaging modernization theory in such a way that made it attractive to the president and his advisors. As Nils Gilman has suggested, Rostow's five stages of economic development were easily digested by policymakers and the wider American public. More importantly, like other theories of modernization, Rostow's was based upon the assumption that the process of development could be artificially accelerated through the judicious use of foreign aid,

monetary assistance, and technical advice.[30] Modernization theorists, including Rostow, also assumed that local military forces would play an important role in the development process given their organizational capacity and potential contribution to internal stability.[31] Policymakers in the Kennedy administration, whose Cold War mindset already favoured military forces in friendly countries as bulwarks against Soviet expansionism, readily accepted these arguments; support for economic development frequently went hand in hand with extensive military assistance.[32]

Due in large part to Rostow's influential role alongside other "action intellectuals" with similar backgrounds and worldviews, the Kennedy administration has generally been seen as the high-water mark for modernization in US foreign policy.[33] Michael Latham has argued that the Kennedy administration did not merely adopt the principles behind modernization theory as a set of rhetorical or strategic devices in order to help wage the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Rather, according to Latham, modernization theory was actually a sincerely held belief, an ideology to explain America's role in the world. Whilst he is careful not to diminish national security considerations in Kennedy's formulation of foreign policy, Latham stresses modernization as the principal intellectual and moral paradigm within which US policymakers operated.[34]

It is generally assumed that the beginning of the 1970s mark the end of modernization theory's influence in US foreign policy, as its failure in Vietnam marked the "passing of an idea."[35] Moreover, the domestic upheaval caused by Vietnam, the ongoing civil rights struggle, and student unrest meant that "by the late 1960s, it was harder for the United States to claim that a stable, ordered modernity had already been achieved."[36] Internal crises within the liberal movement and sustained attack by conservative critics, who offered alternative neoliberal strategies, meant that modernization theory was on its knees by the mid-1970s.[37] Despite this, it is generally agreed among historians that during the 1960s, modernization theory and its adherents held the reins of US foreign policy, putting into practice assumptions about the world that stemmed from the work of scholars such as Rostow.

However, this assessment does not quite tell the whole truth. In Iran, two important factors were at play that competed with modernization theory for the time, attention, and energy of US officials that meant that despite its influence, modernization was not the driving force behind the Kennedy administration's policies. Firstly, there was considerable variation in faith in modernization among US officials. While viewing modernization as an ideology in policymaking circles, as Latham does,

is a useful way of understanding how American officials conceptualized the Third World, it is less effective in explaining the different – often conflicting – factors that impact US policy. Although many American policymakers were predisposed to accept modernization as a concept for understanding the discrepancies in development across the globe, the level and extent of adherence was not homogenous. Bureaucratic disputes between officials who advocated pressuring the Shah towards reform and those who advised a less forceful approach created an underlying tension between departments and contributed to an inconsistent set of policies.

One of the most significant of these disputes was between Robert Komer, a member of the National Security Council staff who belonged to the former group, and the American ambassador to Tehran, Julius C. Holmes, who urged Washington to follow a more cautious policy. These tensions, epitomized by the Komer–Holmes dispute, show the limitations of modernization as a guiding principle for the Kennedy administration. Clearly, modernization theory's unilinear explanation of history was accepted by many Kennedy policymakers. However, this did not mean that modernization was enthusiastically adopted as the most effective strategy available; the variety of opinions within Washington meant it did not always determine the direction of the Kennedy administration's policy.

Secondly, although it was generally accepted that improving the economic development of countries friendly to the United States would help contain the Soviet Union, this was not the only, or even most important, concern for US policymakers. Indeed, the case of Iran illustrates the difficulties Washington encountered when trying to export modernization. On the surface, Iran should have been an ideal place to try and implement modernization, but in practice the situation was much more complicated. As Roland Popp has suggested, throughout the Kennedy years "Cold War strategic concerns took precedence" over Rostow's principles of modernization.[38] Given Iran's strategic location on the Soviet border and abundance of oil vital to American allies in Western Europe and Japan, geostrategic security concerns routinely trumped considerations of modernization. As will be shown in the following chapter, the Kennedy administration saw the Shah as central to maintaining stability, and therefore security, in Iran, which led to a concerted effort by US officials to flatter his fragile ego and reassure him of American support for his regime in order to maintain close relations with Tehran through a policy of "massage." This policy was continued by the Johnson administration and served to undercut and limit constructive

American criticism of the Shah's domestic programmes. Even during the Kennedy administration, therefore, when modernization theory was embraced by influential policymakers like Robert Komer, it took a backseat to the more important objective of maintaining a stable Iran through support for the Shah and the Pahlavi regime.

Robert Komer and Julius C. Holmes

Kennedy assigned McGeorge 'Mac' Bundy the task of restructuring the NSC as his special assistant for national security affairs. The new initiatives that Bundy implemented quickly altered the function and processes of the NSC from its incarnation under Eisenhower.[39] John Prados has written that Bundy "transformed the NSC staff from servants of the *presidency* to those of *the President*." This gave the NSC staff, as opposed to the Council itself, considerable power: "staff became Kennedy's eyes and ears, no longer disinterested mediators working to push papers up to the NSC level."[40] Moreover, Bundy's tenure as Kennedy's special assistant saw "the NSC *staff* [begin] to gain power at the expense of the National Security *Council*."[41] Bundy was also keen to assert the pre-eminence of the NSC staff over the State Department, which fitted neatly with the White House's view that the State Department "was weak and ineffectual" but contributed to burgeoning tension between the two departments.[42]

Among Kennedy's NSC staff were "the best and the brightest" academics and policymakers of the generation; as the youngest dean in Harvard University's history, Mac Bundy was no exception.[43] Other Ivy League graduates and academics to work in or closely with the NSC staff included the economist Walt Rostow, the historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Fulbright scholar Carl Kaysen. Robert Komer, another Harvard PhD who joined the NSC staff from the CIA, had been recommended by his former boss in the Agency, Mac Bundy's brother, William.[44] Komer became Kennedy's, and subsequently Lyndon Johnson's, "jack of all trades," handling Africa; the Middle East; Central, South, and Southeast Asia; and China.[45] According to Komer, in his first week on the NSC staff, Bundy asked him about a letter recently received from the Shah, which needed a response:

> I said, 'Mac' (we were feeling each other out at this point) I bet I can tell you what the letter says without reading it.' Bundy said, 'All right, fall on your face.' So I said, 'The Shah writes the President how happy he is to have a new, young, active President of the United States who he is sure will understand the world the way the Shah sees it. That

> he is surrounded by enemies – not just the Soviets but Gamal Abdal Nasser and others. That he desperately needs some more military equipment. That he hopes the new President will be smarter than the old President, and will give him – or sell him – this equipment.' Mac looked at me, he said, 'By God you did it!'[46]

By Komer's account, following this incident he "became by a process of osmosis the Iranian guy in the White House."[47] As the NSC staff became more powerful under Kennedy, the input of officials like Komer became more valuable as Bundy "generally made no attempt to block their access to the president."[48] The level of trust Bundy placed in his subordinates ensured Komer's voice on Iranian matters was one of the loudest and his opinion one of the most important. Since Kennedy took office, Komer had been one of the Shah's most consistent and vocal critics. His forthright views frequently created tension with other officials who held a more positive attitude regarding Iran, particularly within the State Department and the American embassy in Tehran. Secretary of State Dean Rusk was among those officials who clashed with Komer's preferred brand of forceful pressure towards Iranian reform; while Komer advocated a greater level of intervention in Iranian affairs, Rusk resisted those he later called the "eager beavers who wanted to tell everybody else how to run their own business."[49] Rusk believed that the United States should not try to direct the Shah towards internal reform "because it wasn't our responsibility, and very often we didn't know enough to know whether or not we were right."[50]

This tension was exemplified by the consistently opposing views held by Robert Komer and Ambassador Julius C. Holmes. In many ways, Holmes represented a completely different kind of official to Komer. Born in 1899 in Pleasanton, Kansas, Holmes was 23 years Komer's senior, with a wealth of diplomatic experience, having joined the Foreign Service in 1925.[51] He replaced Edward T. Wailes as ambassador to Iran on 9 May 1961, after some debate within the Senate about the propriety of a business deal 15 years earlier in which he earned $315,000 from a $10,300 investment involving war-surplus oil tankers.[52] Where Komer fitted the Kennedy model of an "activist" official, Holmes, a career diplomat, was of a more traditional bent. This was reflected in his insistence that the United States should not pressure the Shah unduly on issues of reform and development, which conflicted with Komer's assertion that Washington needed to push the Shah towards modernization. The tension that arose between Komer and Holmes illustrated the limits of modernization as a guiding principle for the Kennedy administration.

Rising Tensions

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was concerned that Kennedy's election would mean a readjustment of the close US–Iranian relationship that had been developed under President Eisenhower. Concerned by the prospect of a change in attitude in the White House, the Shah sent General Bakhtiar, the head of SAVAK, in March 1961 to meet with the young president. Bakhtiar was instructed to gauge whether the New Frontiersmen's attitude regarding Iran would differ from the Eisenhower administration's. During their meetings, Kennedy told Bakhtiar that he wished "to reassure the Shah of our continued interest" in Iran's stability.[53] Secretary of State Dean Rusk a week earlier offered similar reassurance, suggesting that if Bakhtiar "had come to 'take the temperature' of the new Administration…he could rest assured that the United States would take a lively and positive interest in Iran's progress."[54] The need to reassure the Iranian monarch of American willingness to support him was to be a persistent feature of US–Iranian relations during Kennedy's 1,000 days in office.

Indicating the significance Kennedy placed upon Iran, the distinguished statesman Averell Harriman was instructed to give the country considerable attention in his role as ambassador at large. In spite of his shrewd intelligence, the Shah was also nervous by nature. In a six-hour meeting with the Shah, Harriman "laid at rest his fears" that any warming in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union would leave Iran exposed to communist subversion. In return, the Shah made his common request for financial support for Iran and, most importantly in his mind, its military.[55] Harriman reported back to Washington that he had "been greatly impressed by the progress which he had noted in Tehran after an absence of about ten years." Ironically, he also stated that he "had not felt that there was an immediate prospect of crisis in Iran."[56] A report on Iran's internal situation drafted by the highly influential John W. Bowling further illustrated the State Department policy regarding Iran. Bowling first dismissed the main opposition to the Shah, the moderate National Front, as "idealistic and impractical," making it clear that US policy would not be encouraging political modernization.[57] He went on to argue that despite assertions by critics of US relations with Iran, the Shah was not "a creature of the United States," which greatly limited the effectiveness of US interference in Iranian affairs.[58] Even so, Bowling detailed why he considered it prudent to not support anyone but the Shah by suggesting

> that the United States would be best advised to continue its present policy of reassurance to the Shah of United States sympathy and support, along with persistent but delicate inferences by our Ambassador to the effect that the Shah should devote his attention to his internal political problems rather than to foreign and military affairs.[59]

Bowling's formulation of US policy – reassurance alongside "delicate inferences" to focus on internal political problems – was adopted as a mantra by the Department of State. It emphasized the need to maintain friendly ties with the Shah ahead of pursuing modernization. Moreover, the insistence on "delicate inferences" was to become a major sticking point between those like Komer, who advocated a more forceful approach, and embassy officials, who felt delicacy was necessary given the Shah's temperament and Washington's reliance upon him as a stabilizing force.

Iran's internal instability was tested again in May 1961 when police killed a number of protestors during a teachers' strike led by Mohammad Derakhshesh.[60] In order to quell the rising opposition to the present government, the Shah replaced Prime Minister Jafar-Sharif Imami with Ali Amini, a respected moderate opposition figure.[61] In order to overcome the ongoing crisis, the Shah granted Amini the power to rule by decree.[62] The fast-moving nature of these events forced the Kennedy administration to reassess its policy towards Iran. The president ordered the creation of an Iran Task Force within the State Department devoted to assessing the potentially explosive situation and providing advice to the NSC on how Washington should handle it.[63] Reporting from Iran, the then ambassador Edward Wailes suggested that Amini "appears predisposed seriously to attempt" a number of tax and financial reforms that American policymakers believed were badly needed in Tehran.[64] However, he also stated, rather primly, that the administration "should publicly neither support Amini personally nor identify itself with him to any greater extent than has been or should be properly done with any other Prime Minister."[65] Wailes stressed the difficulty and sensitivity of offering advice to Iranian officials and suggested that "this is something which must be played by ear by [the] Ambassador on [the] spot" – an opinion that his successor Julius Holmes wholeheartedly agreed with and that would cause tensions between the Embassy and those in the White House arguing for a more assertive approach.[66]

From the American perspective, Amini appeared to be the ideal candidate for prime minister. He was intelligent, capable, and determined to implement a number of important reforms, including land reform. It has

been suggested that the appointment of Amini "symbolized the height of American influence in Iranian politics, and the Shah's submission to American pressure clearly indicated that the Iranian–US relationship had indeed developed very asymmetrically in favor of Washington."[67] Amini's appointment was welcomed in Washington; his credentials as a reformist matched the New Frontier's rhetoric, and his experience as ambassador to the United States and key negotiator in talks with the American-dominated oil consortium in the mid-1950s made him well known in policymaking circles. Indeed, Amini closely resembled the New Frontiersmen who occupied the White House; the *New York Times* described him as "always 'itching to get things done.'"[68]

The Shah, who was never enamoured by Amini's reformist credentials, later blamed the Americans for forcing him to appoint Amini as prime minister. In media interviews and his memoir, *Answer to History,* the Shah pointed his finger at JFK for pressuring him to appoint Amini and even incriminated Jackie Kennedy who he said "spoke of Amini's wonderfully flashing eyes."[69] US officials refuted the Shah's claims and, although they were pleased by Amini's appointment, it is more likely that the Shah responded to American encouragement simply in order to mollify Washington. In Iran, rumours abounded that Amini's land reform effort was "both designed and imposed by US development theorists at the instigation of the US government."[70] Considering the difficulty of pushing successive Iranian governments in any direction, American officials would have found this somewhat ironic.

Moreover, this assumes that at this time the Shah had a high degree of reliance upon the Kennedy administration for support and survival. Certainly, by the end of the decade, Iran was far more independent, but even during JFK's years in office the Shah was rarely at the beck and call of the White House. It is fair to say, however, that the Kennedy administration had made a slight turn away from its predecessor by placing greater emphasis on the need for different forms of development, albeit in an often inconsistent manner.[71] The question upon which all American officials – state, defence, NSC – agreed, and the one the Shah opposed the most, was the need to reduce the Iranian military's expenditure, which US officials believed could be best achieved through a reduction in American military aid.[72]

In response to a report by the Iran Task Force, Robert Komer informed Kennedy that it was "a pretty good action program," and its advice to support Amini more openly and forcefully with aid, even at the risk of incurring the Shah's displeasure, ought to be heeded. Komer was particularly pleased that the report appeared to suggest an alternative to State's

"perennially" cautious current course.[73] The initial Task Force report represented, in many ways, the pinnacle of modernization in Kennedy's policy towards Iran. It urged a degree of urgency regarding development issues, thus fitting reasonably closely to the policies advocated by Komer. Another official who, like Komer, was to persistently advocate greater emphasis on political and economic reform was Kenneth Hansen of the Bureau of Budget.[74] Throughout the Kennedy years, Hansen proved to be a vital ally of Komer, frequently offering similar advice and rejecting the more cautious views that sprang from the embassy in Tehran.

Komer's insistence on supporting Amini more vigorously was bolstered by a CIA Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE 34.2-61). The report highlighted two potential issues for concern: the possibility of Amini's stability being undermined by Nationalist and Communist propaganda, and the increased possibility of a destabilizing military coup. Moreover, SNIE 34.2-61 suggested that Amini was the best chance for a genuinely democratic and stable Iran:

> One thing is clear to date: the appointment of Amini represents a significant step toward liberalization of the government. Should Amini be able to develop an independent position and implement a major reform program, the chances of evolutionary development toward more stable and representative government in Iran would be enhanced. If, on the other hand, the Shah should attempt to force Amini into a puppet's role, or should replace him with some politician subservient to the throne, the unrest which brought Amini to power would be likely to break out more violently than ever.[75]

In essence this was an expression of the principles behind modernization – that economic and political reform leads to development and stability. At its heart, SNIE 34.2-61 was a push for prioritizing modernization as an effective means of both bolstering Amini's government and producing stability.

The situation that Amini inherited was, however, far from stable as further National Front demonstrations turned into riots in July 1961.[76] Tehran also saw more student riots in October. Whilst the regime dismissed protests as simply a reactionary response to the regime's land reform efforts, they actually stemmed from opposition to the regime's unrepresentative nature and the continuing economic downturn.[77] In August, the Iran Task Force reported that the Shah's Third Development Plan was "generally well-conceived, although much detail remains to be filled in," and the economic situation continued to be poor.[78]

Komer considered Iran to be in an extremely dangerous position and informed Kennedy that "despite its much lower visibility, the continued slide toward chaos in Iran could result in as great a setback as in South Vietnam."[79]

Komer lamented the fact, as he saw it, that three months had passed since Amini's appointment and little had been done to secure his position. According to Komer, Iran was in crisis and needed to be treated as such by implementing more vigorous support of Amini at the same time as helping to defend him from the Shah's machinations.[80] Three days later, McGeorge Bundy sent a memorandum to Dean Rusk expressing Kennedy's concern about the situation in Iran and the American response to it. This memorandum repeated almost verbatim the concerns that Komer had raised with the president, including the comparison with South Vietnam.[81] Komer's concerns about Iran and his objections to State's caution had reached the highest level in the White House.

The Iran Task Force remained concerned about Amini's lack of broad political support and that his reform efforts had lost their momentum. In keeping with the Kennedy administration's emphasis on modernization, the Task Force also made seven recommendations for improving Iran's political stability: extensive land reform; a campaign to tackle government corruption; tax reform; winter unemployment relief; broadening the cabinet; more effective publicity on possibilities and accomplishments of economic development; and the organization of broader political support.[82] Komer felt vindicated in his efforts to speed things along. He described the Task Force as having at last come up "with more interesting ideas and sense of movement than they have surfaced in the three months since the initial TF report."[83] Combined with his advice to JFK, the Task Force's recommendations suited Komer's preference for a more activist policy. As he triumphantly told Bundy, Komer was pleased at having "State's feet to the fire" and, while he would "give them a chance," he also "intend[ed] to keep pushing until told to lay off."[84]

In stark contrast, Julius Holmes was relatively optimistic about Iran even while he lamented the fact that "Amini…must work in the Persian atmosphere and must deal principally with other Persians in attempting to resolve the problems facing him."[85] The ambassador refuted the Task Force's estimate, claiming that Amini was still making progress thanks to US assistance and Iran "should [not] as yet be described as desperate."[86] When the Task Force met again in September, however, it concluded that the economic situation was still "depressing."[87] Moreover,

Kenneth Hansen reproached the Tehran Embassy for its "do-nothing approach."[88] Komer concurred and suggested that ultimately the question they faced was "between too much pressure and presence or none at all."[89] Even whilst defending Holmes and his colleagues, Assistant Secretary for the Near East and South Asia Philips Talbot admitted that Iran was "definitely in a crisis."[90]

As Komer suggested, the tension was largely over how much pressure the United States should put on the Shah to accept Amini's reforms. Hansen took an even more contentious position and questioned whether the United States was overly reliant on the position of the Shah in Iran.[91] The divisions within the Kennedy administration centred on the extent to which different officials and departments believed that a vigorous policy based on the basic tenets of modernization theory were appropriate in the case of Iran. Unlike Komer and Hansen, policymakers such as Holmes and his colleagues in the State Department feared that overt pressure might cause Tehran to break ties with Washington. This Holmesian view appeared to be validated when the Shah attempted to consolidate his own power, creating an opportunity for the ambassador to demonstrate the value of his more cautious approach.

In October 1961, Holmes expressed great concern that in light of recent internal unrest the Shah might manoeuvre himself into a position that would completely undermine Amini. Ironically, this is one of the few times that Holmes wrote with a real sense of urgency, encouraging meaningful American economic support, military aid, and personal intervention.[92] Although Komer supported economic assistance in order to influence the Shah, he rejected Holmes' proposed use of military assistance.[93] On 30 October 1961, Holmes met with the Shah and the British ambassador, Sir Geoffrey Harrison. During the meeting the Shah made it known he felt it was necessary to delay elections for at least two years. Sensing the Shah was positioning himself to undermine Amini, both ambassadors sought to dissuade the monarch from adopting personal rule by suggesting that Amini acted as a useful "lightning rod" for the Shah.[94] Although apparently persuaded by this proposition, the Shah revealed something of his attitude concerning the role of the prime minister when he remarked "half to himself, that of course there are others who could do the job."[95]

In his next meeting with the Shah, Holmes reiterated his advice that the monarch should not assume personal rule, which might foment further opposition to the regime and put responsibility for the success of its reform and development plans on the Shah's head. Holmes reported that he "used every means in Doctor Amini's favor that I could

appropriately employ without going so far as to tell the Shah whom he should have as Prime Minister."[96] The Shah was again persuaded and, for a while at least, allowed Amini to continue in office. Holmes' efforts were recognized by the Iran Task Force as a "spectacular example" of delicate diplomacy. Elsewhere within the State Department, this was seen as vindication of Holmes' approach towards Iran – cautious, gentle prodding of the Shah towards development so as to avoid displeasing him.[97]

However, not all US officials were convinced; Robert Komer among them and most vociferous. Komer dismissed the latest Task Force report as just the State Department telling the White House "to keep its cotton-picking hands off this problem." The United States, according to Komer, was "going to hell in a hack in Iran, and…our policy is *not* sufficient unto the need." As Komer pointed out, with the exception of Holmes, most officials held a similarly pessimistic view. The main difference was that the State Department believed the present policy was adequate. Furthermore, Komer suggested that the two strategies offered by the State Department – either support the erratic National Front (NF) or continue to back the Shah – were misleading. In fact, Komer argued, the US ought to "back a moderately progressive government in an attempt to take the wind out of the NF's sails, risking the Shah's displeasure if necessary but seeking to keep him in line."[98] This was what had been decided in the aftermath of the teachers' riots in May 1961 by the Task Force and again by Kennedy in August 1961, but had apparently been rejected by the State Department in favour of unwavering support of the Shah, unwilling to risk his disapproval. Komer's disdain for Ambassador Holmes grew:

> [H]ad you heard Holmes when he was back here last time, describing how he really shared the Shah's fear of the Afghans and Iraqis and how we must insure Iran's security as first priority, you would realize that this competent but traditionally-minded diplomat just doesn't understand the essential nature of the problem we confront in Iran today. The first priority is rather how to accomplish the transition from a feudal regime to a modernized society without such chaos and upheaval as will permit Khrushchev to make good on his boast that Iran will fall like a ripe plum into his lap.[99]

In light of the Shah's pending visit to the United States in April 1962, US policymakers held a number of meetings to formulate the best strategy for dealing with the tricky monarch. The various government departments used this opportunity to put their stamp on US–Iran policy.

Fowler Hamilton, administrator of the Agency for International Development (AID), proposed a $330 million Military Assistance Program (MAP) over a five-year period. In addition, AID also advocated a serious commitment by the United States to help Iran with its Third Development Plan.[100] AID's proposal was a compromise between a $300 million package proposed by the MAP Steering Group and $424 million recommended by Julius Holmes.[101] In each of the proposals, the reduction of the Iranian armed forces from 200,000 to 150,000 was deemed to be a necessary requisite both for economic reasons and military efficiency. The Shah was widely recognized as "depressed and resentful over allegedly inadequate United States military assistance," therefore the State Department advised accepting AID's $330 million military-economic package.[102]

At subsequent NSC Standing Group meetings, the question of modernization was neglected as US officials focused on the military assistance issue and the need to reassure the Shah of continuing American support.[103] Only days before the Shah arrived in the United States, Kenneth Hansen recorded his dismay at this overwhelming focus on military assistance. Hansen wished to push further on economic development, modernization, and ultimately political development. According to Hansen, it was more important for US policy to emphasize "selling" the economic factors, rather than "unselling the Shah from a bigger and more glamorous military package."[104] In keeping with the Kennedy administration's adherence to modernization theories, Hansen's colleague, William Gaud, also underlined the need for economic development. Acknowledging the importance of modernization, Kennedy reassured them both that "he would not neglect the economic side in his discussions with the Shah."[105]

However, at the first meeting with the Shah, the Iranian monarch returned to the military question at every opportunity, complaining that "America treats Turkey as a wife, and Iran as a concubine."[106] Whilst the Americans did raise the issue of economic development briefly, the five-year MAP, regional security issues, and other military problems remained at the top of the agenda. This pattern continued throughout the Shah's visit. During his meeting with Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara, the Shah was particularly enamoured with M-113 armoured personnel carriers and F-86 aircraft; both were still in use by US forces and, therefore, in the Shah's eyes, prestige items. For US officials, it was important to persuade the Shah to reduce the number of Iranian troops by 50,000 to make the military more effective and less burdensome. An indication of the Shah's ability to get his own way, as well as precisely

what his priorities were, was made apparent when the two sides reached a tentative agreement that he would try to reduce his troops by just 10,000.[107] Even so, the Shah was still disappointed regarding the level of military assistance the US was willing to commit. Averell Harriman responded to these concerns by saying that the US really hoped to put more emphasis on economic development rather than military assistance.[108] Despite these occasional attempts to broach the subject of modernization, American policymakers consistently had to contend with the Shah's unquenchable desire for a first-rate military. All too frequently this overshadowed all other issues on the table.

In his last meeting with the Shah, President Kennedy did try to steer the discussion around to modernization and away from military issues. Kennedy stated that Washington is "pinning great hopes" on Iran's economic development programme. The president congratulated "the Shah for having found such an excellent Prime Minister and for supporting him in his efforts."[109] This mirrored Komer's advice that the United States ought to firmly back Amini and work to prevent the Shah from undermining him. It also stressed the importance of economic development to Iran's future stability and success. However, the Shah quickly turned back to the importance of security, and therefore military, issues.

The Shah would have been pleased by the *aide-mémoire* given to him by Secretary Rusk at the end of the visit, as it made no mention of any agreements other than detailed military assistance and equipment.[110] Even the president's support for Amini was undermined by his assertion that "the Shah is the keystone to the arch in Iran," thereby implying that the Shah's role was indispensable whereas others', such as the prime minister's, were not.[111] American interests in Iran had turned into virtually unequivocal support for the Shah through the use of continuing military and economic assistance, with little emphasis on political development. The fact that questions about Iran's military development dominated the Shah's visit revealed the extent to which the Kennedy administration had come to favour military assistance over pressuring the Shah towards modernization as the best means of maintaining close relations with Tehran.

Despite hopes that Iran would become more stable through the US relationship with the Shah, the internal situation actually deteriorated during the first six months of 1962. On 1 June, Robert Komer noted his fear that "we may be heading for another crisis in Iran." Amini's Plan Organisation and Third Development Plan were "in a parlous state," and the prime minister himself appeared "fatigued and seems to have lost control of the situation."[112] A week and a half later, the embassy in

Tehran acknowledged that the economic situation was worsening but focused the blame entirely on Amini. Indeed, Holmes' colleague Stuart Rockwell suggested that "with regard to specific support by [the] Shah, we do not feel Amini can have serious complaint; the difficulties confronting him at present time are due far more to actions or inactions of himself or his government than to [the] role of [the] Shah."[113] In other words, the Shah has done his best and any financial deterioration is down to the prime minister, thus the United States was right to back the Shah without too much pressure.

Unsurprisingly, Komer rejected this assessment, complaining that the embassy's "reaction [to Amini's financial difficulty and efforts to reduce the budget] seems unduly passive."[114] Even Dean Rusk responded to Rockwell's telegram, stating "we are puzzled by your comment that it would 'probably be too much to expect the Shah to bail Amini out of [a] situation essentially created by Amini himself.'"[115] Rusk advised encouraging the Shah to do more to relieve Amini's economic woes but refused to offer any US aid without "evidence of responsible fiscal management."[116]

Amini's attempt to reduce the Iranian budget by making cuts in most government ministries ultimately proved unsuccessful. Following a meeting with the prime minister, Holmes stated that he "shall probably not be able to offer any recommendations as to what we should do here until after final budget figures are available for study."[117] In July, Amini resigned because his financial efforts had inevitably "brought him into confrontation with the Shah and the military."[118] James Bill has also argued that Amini's increasing reliance on authoritarian methods – in order to circumvent opposition to his reforms among the upper classes and National Front resentment over the lack of representation – caused widespread discontent.[119] Without a broad political base or support from the National Front, Amini was undercut by the Shah's refusal to reduce the military budget.[120]

Up until the day Amini resigned, both Komer and Holmes argued "that there's no decent alternative to Amini on the horizon." Komer also agreed with his colleagues that "Iran should be forced to dig itself out of this one instead of our bailing it out again" but still advocated pushing the Shah as far as possible to back Amini and cut the military budget.[121] Komer once again rejected "Holmes' policy of standing back" and advocated diplomatic intervention to save Amini, "the only one *anybody knows of* who can carry Iran where we want it to go." The bureaucratic tension that had pervaded US–Iran policy for the preceding 18 months was felt again in Komer's "fear…that we won't make an all-out effort unless… [President Kennedy will] lay down the law."[122]

Without Kennedy's personal intervention, Komer felt the State Department would continue in its cautious approach.

The day after Amini's resignation, Komer continued his effort to reinvigorate US policy. In a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy, he again repudiated the Holmesian line of "not entangling ourselves too much in Iranian affairs," arguing that "we're already blamed by the Iranians for this crisis anyway, and I'd rather be hanged for a goat than a sheep."[123] However, by August 1962, President Kennedy had definitively drawn the curtain on the Amini premiership. In a letter to the Shah, the president expressed sorrow at the loss of Amini but confidence that the Shah and the new government would be equally successful. Kennedy also stressed his confidence that Iran's financial situation could be resolved by "bold decisions" in Iran. Moreover, Kennedy noted and thanked the Shah for his efforts regarding crises in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Kashmir and acknowledged both Iran's strategic importance and America's continued interest in her security and development.[124] Effectively, this letter informed the Shah that although it was a pity that Amini had had to resign, it was now business as usual. The tensions between different departmental groups had undermined initial US support for Amini and his reforms, leaving the Kennedy administration to resort to throwing its weight behind the Shah's regime in order to maintain stability.

Ultimately, the tension between Komer and Holmes created an incoherent approach towards Iran that increasingly sidelined issues of development and fostered greater reliance on military assistance. Support for economic development and land reform neither reduced the expense of the military nor the Shah's focus on it. Moreover, the tension between Komer and Holmes highlighted Washington's dependence on the Shah and reluctance to explore potential alternatives, such as the National Front. Amini's resignation in July 1962 therefore solidified the prevailing acceptance of and support for the Shah's regime among US policymakers.

Conclusion

Throughout the first 18 months of Kennedy's presidency, the diverging views of Robert Komer and Julius Holmes typified the division within the administration over the role modernization theory should play in US policy towards Iran. On the one hand, Komer, backed by McGeorge Bundy and Kenneth Hansen, advocated bringing increasing pressure to bear on the Shah to implement development-oriented reforms. On the other, Holmes, alongside his colleagues in the State Department, placed

a higher premium on maintaining stability and argued that to push the Shah too hard in any direction would result in tensions between Washington and Tehran. Given Iran's huge oil reserves and significance in the Kennedy administration's Cold War containment strategy, Holmes placed greater emphasis on the importance of the country's internal stability than on its development.

The glaring disparity between the two points of view expressed by Komer and Holmes contributed to the Kennedy administration adopting an incoherent approach towards Iran. While rhetorical emphasis was placed on the need for reform and development, discussions with the Shah focused on Iran's military requirements. When Amini became prime minister, the divisions within the Kennedy administration were brought into sharp relief. Even though both Komer and Holmes agreed that Amini was the most able Iranian politician available, the unwillingness shown by Holmes to defend him from the Shah and encourage the monarch to give him greater support frustrated Komer enormously. Moreover, the inconsistent messages coming from Washington made it extremely difficult for Amini to assert himself against the Shah, eventually forcing his resignation.

Amini's resignation did not, however, bring the tension between Komer and Holmes to an end. In September 1962, responding to a request from the Shah, Holmes was authorized to inform the Iranian leader that he could purchase two frigates to expand the small Iranian navy. Secretary of State Dean Rusk gave the ambassador clear instructions that this decision was due to the president's personal intervention and should not be seen as acquiescence to the Shah's requests. More importantly, it was imperative that Holmes strongly reiterate that the US had no more military assistance to give.[125] However, when he met with the Shah, Holmes failed to emphasize Kennedy's involvement and allowed him to discuss even more military requests, without asserting the position that the US would not be giving any more military hardware.[126] While the Shah was naturally pleased that he was able to acquire the ships that he wanted, the incident infuriated Komer.

In a note to Kennedy, Komer observed that "for some reason Holmes did not come back at [the] Shah along the lines of the rather explicit instructions we sent him following Mac Bundy's phone talk with you."[127] He went on to criticize Holmes for not being firm with the Shah and drawing a line under the military negotiations. Less than a month later, the disagreement between Komer and Holmes escalated further. In a report to Bundy, Komer reiterated his recommendation that the US needed to be more firm and vigorous regarding Iran's reform programme

and concluded that it was perhaps time to consider replacing Holmes as ambassador. Although he acknowledged Holmes's "toughminded" nature, he complained that he was "too much of a traditionalist for the role" and suggested it was time to "look for a better ambassador."[128]

The fact that Holmes remained as ambassador for another three years did little to alleviate the tensions between the NSC staff and the embassy. It is clear that the dispute between Komer and Holmes was not conducive to a coherent and consistent policy towards Iran, as direction given from the White House was not always followed to the letter by the embassy in Tehran. The diverging opinions rested on the question of how far and how fast the Kennedy administration needed to push the Shah to implement reforms designed to accelerate the process of modernization within Iran. In many ways, it was a dispute between the inner circle of the New Frontier, men like Komer and Bundy who urged an activist approach to foreign policy, and officials like Holmes who favoured a more cautious strategy when handling the sensitive Shah. The Komer–Holmes tension highlights the reality that there was no ideology of modernization within the Kennedy administration. Modernization was not, therefore, central to Kennedy's policies towards important parts of the Third World, such as Iran. Rather, disparate points of view about the exigency and effectiveness of modernization theory coexisted uncomfortably alongside one another, creating an incoherent Iran policy that diminished the importance of modernization and favoured stability over development.

Moreover, while the internal clashes that manifested between "activist" and "cautious" officials demonstrate the minor role that modernization ended up having in US policy during the early 1960s, they have also served to hide a less remarked-upon consensus within the Kennedy administration. Although tensions abounded over the question of modernization, following Amini's resignation there was a uniform acceptance that the Shah was the best – or perhaps only – vehicle for achieving US objectives in Iran and the Persian Gulf. The following chapter will discuss how John F. Kennedy, driven in large part by Robert Komer's observations, adopted a "policy of massage" to placate the Shah's fragile ego and maintain close ties with Tehran.

3

JFK, the "Massage Problem," Modernization, and Missed Opportunities

Towards the end of 1962, Robert Komer viewed the situation in Iran with a combination of disdain and pessimism. Iran was, according to Komer, "perhaps the softest country around the Bloc periphery." In a message to President Kennedy, Komer observed that "the trend line [in Iran] is still toward upset of yet another outworn monarchy, with resultant chaos, because it is not moving fast enough to ride the tide of modernization."[1] Although Komer was by no means an admirer of the Shah, he reluctantly characterized him as the only viable ruler in Iran. Ambassador Julius Holmes, on the other hand, used his influential position to argue that the United States needed to back the Shah because no alternative was in sight. This assumption had been bolstered since Ali Amini's rapid fall from grace, when the Shah had begun to reassert his direct control over Iran's political landscape. Following Amini's resignation, the Shah appointed his old childhood friend and close confidant Asadollah Alam as the new prime minister, a move that signalled to observers that the Shah was to take a more central role in the running of his country.

In spite of this new-found confidence, American officials observed that the Shah had long exhibited a tendency to doubt Washington's support for his regime. Noting the Shah's often nervous disposition, Komer identified the need to stroke his ego to assure him of American support and thus retain hope of influencing him in a reformist direction. Komer termed this facet of US–Iranian relations a "massage problem," whereby American officials sought to maintain a close relationship with the Pahlavi regime by appealing to the Shah's ego using a variety of diplomatic methods.[2] Unlike the question of modernization, during the second half of the Kennedy administration, the issues raised by and the need to resolve the "massage problem" were met by interdepartmental consensus.

Whilst acknowledging the tensions between different bureaucracies is fundamental in understanding the Kennedy administration's policies towards Iran, it is also important to highlight the areas of consensus. The discussion of the existence – or exaggeration – of bureaucratic tensions has threatened to simplify our understanding of the Kennedy administration's policies towards Iran. The opposing stances taken by James Goode and April Summitt, who claim bureaucratic tensions were rife, and Victor Nemchenok, who argues that these differences have been overblown, have given rise to a binary approach for explaining Kennedy's relations with Iran: either there were tensions between bureaucracies over methodologies *or* there was a consensus on objectives. Adhering to this limited set of assumptions has obscured the fact that at any given time of an administration's life, differences on one issue among policymakers often sit neatly alongside agreement on another. In this case, both the Goode/Summitt and the Nemchenok theses are valid.

As the preceding chapter has shown, there were certainly tensions regarding the level of pressure Washington should bring to bear on the Shah over issues of reform. Despite this, there was also a simultaneous consensus that some form of massage was required to reassure him of Washington's interest in and appreciation of Iran's pro-American stance in the Cold War. Kennedy's policy towards Iran thus created a clear bridge between the pro-Shah Eisenhower and Johnson administrations and helped build an enthusiasm for the Shah that would last – and rarely be questioned – until the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

This chapter also argues that the conventional emphasis on the antipathy between Kennedy and the Shah by historians has ignored the instrumental role the Kennedy administration had in cultivating closer ties between Washington and Tehran. James Bill's assessment that the Shah had a "personal dislike" for JFK, whilst almost certainly true, reflects the impression that US–Iranian relations during this period worsened because of a lack of rapport between the two leaders.[3] That within days of Kennedy's assassination the Shah wrote an unsent letter to Lyndon Johnson fiercely lambasting his predecessor's policies has reinforced this image.[4] Other historians have noted that after his first meeting with the president, the Shah returned home "bristling over Kennedy's patronizing attitude."[5] There is some truth, therefore, in the conclusion that upon Kennedy's death in 1963, the Shah "looked forward" to Lyndon Johnson's presidency.[6]

Even so, the massage policy was designed to ensure that official relations between the United States and Iran were kept on an even keel. That is not to suggest that the Shah did not feel some disaffection towards

Kennedy in particular or Washington more generally. Nor is it to suggest that JFK had any great fondness for the Shah. Rather, the use of diplomatic niceties helped to overcome possible areas of friction between the two countries. Moreover, the strict adherence to the massage policy led the Kennedy administration to focus its attention upon maintaining a close relationship with the Shah rather than on the oft-stated emphasis towards reform and development. As Eric Jacobsen has suggested about the Kennedy administration's relations with neighbouring Iraq, the US–Iranian relationship was strengthened despite animosity between JFK and the Shah due to a "coincidence of interests," not least because Washington saw the Shah as the key to stability.[7] US officials went out of their way to assure the Shah of JFK's support for his regime and reinforce the relationship between their two countries. The unquestioning nature of this policy created a policymaking environment in which opportunities to press harder on questions of reform and development or to change the direction of US policy were missed – or ignored – in favour of repeated attempts to appeal to the Shah's ego.

The Kennedy years have long been seen as a singular moment in which reformist policies were embraced by Washington in its relations with Tehran. Most recently, David Collier has suggested that Kennedy imposed a reform programme on Iran which may have been able to avert the revolution that overthrew the Shah had it been better adapted to the Iranian situation.[8] However, this interpretation ignores the fact that the Kennedy administration's extensive use of the "massage policy" undermined Washington's ability to influence the direction of the Shah's domestic policies. Instead, this policy contributed to the US becoming increasingly reliant upon the Shah's regime for its goals in the region and strengthened the ties between the two countries. Moreover, it led the Kennedy administration – and its successors – to abandon any lingering impulse to pressure the Shah over reform. As Washington's influence over Tehran declined and the US became irrevocably associated with the Shah's regime, the United States began to accept the Shah's vision of modernity for Iran.

Through the use of a number of case studies, this chapter will detail the Kennedy administration's "massage policy in action" towards the Shah on both his domestic and foreign policies. It highlights two instances where JFK missed an opportunity to reconsider or adopt an alternative approach towards Iran. The first was in January 1963 when Kennedy congratulated the Shah on the results of an evidently rigged national referendum concerning his development-oriented White Revolution. Instead of increasing pressure for reforms, the Kennedy administration's

massage policy was used to validate the Shah's own development programme and thus reinforced US support for the political *status quo* within Iran. The second missed opportunity arose later that year when, in response to developments inside Iran, Kennedy ordered Secretary of State Dean Rusk to conduct a review of US policy towards Iran. This review was the perfect opportunity for policymakers to consider alternative strategies for dealing with Iran, perhaps even ones that did not rely so heavily upon the Shah. By accepting Rusk's advice to maintain the present course, Kennedy institutionalized support for the Shah in Washington.

The Shah Asserts Control

By July 1962, Ali Amini had come into direct conflict with the Shah over control of Iran's military budget; the prime minister's desire to reduce the amount of money spent on increasing Iran's military capacity went against the Shah's perennial desire to improve the effectiveness – and prestige – of his armed forces. Unable to make any headway against the Shah on this issue, Amini resigned from office on 18 July.[9] In Amini's place, the Shah appointed his childhood friend and confidante Asadollah Alam. It was during Alam's premiership that Robert Komer's massage policy began to gain traction within the Kennedy administration and sought to smooth over possible tensions with Iran and cultivate a mutually beneficial relationship.

Intelligence reports also predicted that political developments would see the Shah's increasing personal involvement in "day-to-day government operations." American officials saw Alam's appointment as confirmation of this conclusion. Ambassador Julius Holmes noted that the new prime minister "will represent [the] closest thing to direct rule by [the] Shah."[10] Despite Alam's assertions that he would be independent from the Shah's control, embassy officials argued that "he will be [a] humble and obedient servant of [the] Shah." While the reform programme initiated by Amini would remain largely intact, the impetus for its progress would also "depend mostly on [the] Shah."[11]

Less than a week after Alam's appointment, another CIA report noted unequivocally "that it is not so much Alam's personal qualities and views that will determine the policies and actions of the [Iranian] government as those of the Shah. Alam will be the instrument and the mouthpiece. For all practical purposes it is the Shah himself who will be the prime minister."[12] During a meeting with the American ambassador, the Shah told how he "had had the entire cabinet in today and had instructed

them that the nation's program would be the six points he had enunciated in November." Holmes reported that the Shah "was faint in praise of Alam, saying only that he was young, loyal and energetic," hardly the appraisal one would give of a truly independent prime minister.[13] American opinions of the new government remained sceptical following a meeting with the new Iranian finance minister, in which the Americans detected an air of desperation about Iran's financial situation. When US officials explained their criteria for any further lending, Holmes reported that "there was a rather helpless reaction [by Iranian officials] of 'please tell us what to do.'"[14]

However, the Shah, whose personal confidence had increased greatly since Amini's resignation, did not mirror the confusion and desperation within the new cabinet. By defending the military against Amini's budget cuts, the Shah helped to retain the military's loyalty, particularly of those at the top. The tussle between the Shah and Amini over budget cuts had also undermined the prime minister's efforts to reduce the overall deficit, which in turn rendered Amini's position untenable. Amini was therefore effectively forced to resign, thus removing a powerful politician whom the Shah perceived as a potential threat and rival power source. As American officials recognized, the Shah was now firmly in control of Iranian politics. The appointment of an old friend to replace Amini reflected the Shah's growing confidence in his own position.

Despite Amini's fall from grace, the Shah informed US officials that Iran's domestic policies would continue to be based on his six-point reform programme, which included land reform, electoral reform, and the enfranchisement of women.[15] Within weeks of his appointment, Prime Minister Alam announced a ten-point programme; it bore remarkable similarity to that of the Shah and Amini, with "five of [the] ten points taken bodily from [the] original Amini program."[16] For the Kennedy administration, maintaining the momentum of Iran's reform programme was paramount following Amini's resignation.[17]

US officials continued to emphasize to their Iranian counterparts, to varying degrees, the importance of "domestic reform and development" as a countermeasure to instability and insurgency.[18] Policymakers within the Kennedy administration held a variety of opinions on the Shah's reform programme. Ambassador Holmes in particular was already most impressed with Iran's progress, describing the Shah's land reform as "truly revolutionary."[19] By contrast, Komer was dumbfounded by Holmes' acceptance that the Shah was moving as fast as he could on reform and found "such euphoria hard to believe."[20] The State Department was worried about the economic repercussions of reform and

warned that "the Shah is already half-way down a long toboggan, and that precipitous land reform, though a political plus, will prove a serious economic depressant."[21] These conflicting views reflected the continuing bureaucratic divisions over the question of how much prominence to give the role of modernization in US–Iranian relations.

A significant turning point in Iran's political development came with the resignation of Minister for Agriculture Hassan Arsanjani. Arsanjani had long been a radical proponent of the land reform programme and had been appointed by and survived Amini; the Shah had grown extremely wary of his increasing popularity.[22] Whilst Arsanjani was at one time useful in aggressively pushing land reform, his "flair of rural radicalism, [and] his own knack for populism" brought him into direct conflict with the Shah, causing the minister to resign in March 1963.[23] As Amini had also discovered, the Shah would not tolerate any popular well-known figure who might act as a potential threat to his rule. In a move to further consolidate his own position, the Shah appointed Mehdi Pirasteh as the new minister of interior. Pirasteh was extremely loyal to the Shah, and his new role gave him control over political elements Arsanjani had become accustomed to influencing, notably the gendarmerie in the countryside.[24] Arsanjani's removal put the Shah firmly in control of all aspects of Iran's political life.

Such was the changing political situation that the Shah was increasingly confident about the success of any future elections; the threat to his regime from opposition movements had been severely weakened since the riots in 1961 that had helped bring Amini to office. The National Front – the leftover remnants of the movement that had swept Mohammad Mossadeq to power in 1951, largely made up of intellectuals, students, and middle-class opposition elements – continued to oppose the Shah's regime but had become increasingly disorganized and fractured. American officials viewed the National Front with barely concealed contempt. In October 1961, the Iran Task Force set up by Kennedy had dismissed the National Front as merely "fanatical Mosadeqists."[25] Furthermore, the Shah's reform programme, which was in part an effort to undermine the National Front's appeal, was based on a lot of the same basic aspirations held by the opposition. National Front demonstrations used slogans such as "Reforms Yes, Dictatorship No" to regain the initiative, but much of the impetus for their opposition had been effectively undercut.[26]

Nevertheless, the National Front continued to oppose what they saw as the Shah's over-reliance on US military support and Iran's overt alignment with the West. However, the Shah's security forces used their

extensive networks to repress National Front opposition. Although not dismantled as completely as the Communist Tudeh party had been in the mid-1950s, the National Front found it extremely difficult to operate.[27] Demonstrations and riots were quickly suppressed and followed by severe crackdowns. SAVAK used intimidation and other forms of repression to prevent the National Front from gaining momentum. On a visit to Iran, even Komer expressed surprise about the "comparative absence of effective opposition or violent response" to the Shah.[28] To American observers it seemed that Iran had begun to resolve the instability that had plagued the country at the decade's outset.

In addition, the Shah had asserted his political dominance and established himself firmly in control of the Iranian government. Although some Americans remained unenthusiastic, the Shah was beginning to prove not only the viability of his regime but also his vision of modernity for Iran, based on the perpetuation of the Pahlavi dynasty through authoritarian military-focused modernization. The need to maintain a close relationship with the Shah was deemed more important than ever by Washington. An integral component of the US–Iranian relationship was the Kennedy administration's use of a massage policy to assure the Shah that the United States valued his regime and Iran's pro-Western alignment.

Massage Policy in Action: Iran's Domestic Policy

Throughout Kennedy's time in office, US officials sought to resolve the perceived massage problem by flattering the Shah and stroking his ego on a number of domestic and foreign policy issues. The appointment of Asadollah Alam as Iran's new prime minister was the perfect opportunity for Washington to reiterate its preference for reform and at the same time use the massage policy to reassure the Shah of American goodwill. In a letter to the Shah, President Kennedy stressed the need for economic reform and the American belief that the current Military Assistance Programme (MAP) was sufficient for Iran's needs and therefore did not need expanding. While this letter set out the US position on MAP, it also served to massage the Shah. Kennedy expressed sorrow regarding Amini's resignation but also optimism that the Shah's support of the new government would help it succeed. Noting the need for "bold decisions and the assumption of great responsibilities," Kennedy validated the Shah's position by stating he had "full confidence… in Iran's ability to make such decisions and assume such responsibilities, no matter how difficult they may be."[29]

This policy of massage, which clearly diverged from official views of Alam's government, was intended to reassure the Shah of American support and confidence in his position. Despite Kennedy's allusion to the new government, American officials were under no illusions as to who was really in charge in Tehran. Kennedy therefore applied massage directly to the Shah in order to assuage any concerns that may have arisen because of Amini's resignation. Although Amini had been favoured in Washington – indeed the Shah believed he was forced upon him by American pressure – Kennedy's July letter assured the Iranian leader that the White House was on his side.

In 1962 the Shah, capitalizing upon and co-opting Amini's reformist agenda, initiated a series of reform programmes that came to be known as the White Revolution.[30] Designed as a moderate alternative to red (communist) and black (reactionary religious) revolutions, its linchpin was land reform. The majority of Iran's population lived not in major cities like Tehran, but in rural, agricultural areas owned by wealthy landowners who retained considerable political influence. The Shah's land reform efforts sought to undermine the influence of the aristocratic and landholding classes and encourage popular support for his regime among Iran's rural population. The White Revolution created "thousands of rural cooperatives" and redistributed the land to the peasants who lived and worked on it.[31] For the Shah, it "was intended to be a bloodless revolution from above" that would "secure dynastic legitimacy and the institutionalization of his monarchy."[32]

John Bowling, the State Department's officer in charge of Iranian affairs, noted that the land reform programme had shifted the Shah's political support from its earlier configuration of "the Army and the elite versus the middle class and students…[to] the Army, the peasantry and the urban proletariat versus the traditional elite, students and middle class."[33] Some overly optimistic US officials saw the Shah's land reform as a great success for turning the peasantry, who had long been politically apathetic, into firm supporters of the crown.[34] This was a serious oversimplification, as many rural Iranians, although perhaps grateful to the Shah for the results of his land reform, defined themselves more by their religious faith than loyalty to the crown.

Due to his attempts at land reform, the Shah no longer relied upon the traditional elites and landowners, who opposed any reform of the land, for support. Instead, the Shah was building support among the peasantry as well as the urban working classes and the emerging technocratic middle classes. Iranian intellectuals and other sectors of the middle classes, particularly those associated with the National Front, continued

to oppose the Shah, as did significant parts of the Shia clergy. Even so, the Shah had shifted his base of support from the traditional elites, which reinforced his self-confidence as it fitted his image of himself as a progressive ruler. Executive secretary William Brubeck even thought the Shah was becoming so confident he might try the unthinkable in Iran by holding a genuinely free election.[35] Noting that the Shah had "apparently decided to wrap himself firmly in [the] mantle of 'revolutionary monarch,'" Komer expressed concern that he had also "decided he'll have his own revolution without US advice."[36] American officials were increasingly aware that the Shah was becoming less susceptible to American suggestions.

Despite Komer's concern that the Shah was likely to follow paths that strayed from those advocated by Washington, Kennedy continued to closely adhere to the massage policy. Although most US officials felt that the current political scene in Iran offered no alternative to the Shah, stifled as it was by the Pahlavi regime, the Kennedy administration spurned opportunities to steer its own policy away from the one-dimensional nature of the massage problem and press Tehran further on issues of political development. Instead, prioritizing the need to keep the Shah content with his relationship with Washington above other policy considerations, Kennedy and his advisors chose to cling to the massage policy at the expense of their earlier rhetorical support for reform.

When in January 1963 the Shah held a nationwide referendum on his White Revolution, the reality-defying results (99.9 per cent of Iranians in favour of the reform programme) presented the Kennedy administration with a timely opportunity to support the opening up of the Iranian political system to encourage a broadening of the Shah's political base. Such a policy, if combined with firm reassurance that the US would oppose any threat to Iran's territorial integrity and his claim to the Peacock Throne, might have persuaded the Shah to allow greater political participation for moderate groups such as the National Front. It would not even have required the United States to abandon the massage policy. Instead, in his message, Kennedy noted that it must be "gratifying to learn that a vast majority has supported your leadership in a clear and open expression of their will." This sentence in particular was clearly designed to appeal to the Shah's ego. Kennedy's assertion that the referendum "should renew your confidence in the rightness of your course…in the struggle to better the lot of your people" provided American validation for the Shah's White Revolution.[37] Rather than apply pressure towards some form of political reform or even warn against complacency regarding economic and social development, Kennedy merely regurgitated the basic tenets of

the massage policy by reassuring the Shah that his government was on the right track and that the United States supported him. The president's allusion to Iran's domestic situation was overshadowed by his praise for the Shah's referendum victory, which was portrayed as evidence of the "rightness" of the direction of his policies.

It is also interesting to note that US officials informed their Iranian counterparts that they may publicize the president's message if they so desired, which they dutifully did. This willingness to make public presidential congratulations for a dubious referendum highlighted the significance placed by US officials upon massaging and validating the Shah. Unlike the question of modernization, support for the massage policy had quickly attained an administration-wide consensus. However, by adhering to the massage policy, Kennedy missed an opportunity to pressure the Shah on issues of political reform, which reinforced the impression that Washington was closely aligned with the undemocratic policies of the Pahlavi regime.

Moreover, the recognition that the Shah was no longer likely to follow American instruction did not justify the use of massage. The Shah's increasing unwillingness to heed US advice should not have meant such advice was no longer given, especially on questions of political reform. A combined use of massage and friendly advice might have prevented the Shah from reacting unfavourably to American suggestions that he broaden political discourse with groups such as the National Front. The fact that the Kennedy administration refrained from doing so highlights that its priority was not modernization but the maintenance of close relations with the Pahlavi regime in order to perpetuate the national security strategy of containment that had governed the thinking of previous administrations regarding Iran.

Massage Policy in Action: Iran's Foreign Policy

Having taken steps to consolidate his domestic power, the Shah's newfound confidence also manifested in Iran's increasingly assertive independent foreign policy. Where "positive nationalism" had essentially entailed alignment with the West in the Cold War, the Shah's newly coined "independent national policy" sought to create a balanced position for Tehran in its international relations. Although Tehran was keen to maintain its ties with the West, particularly the United States, the Shah also pursued a normalization of relations with the Soviet Union.[38]

Since the 1953 coup, Moscow had escalated its propaganda programme against the Shah, criticizing Tehran's ties to Washington and seeking to

undermine the Iranian regime.[39] The Shah, in turn, was concerned by the possibility that Soviet-inspired subversion might cause instability within Iran. However, throughout 1962 relations between the two countries began to thaw. Prime Minister Alam informed American officials that Iran's policy regarding the Soviet Union was still "one of firmness [but] without provocation."[40] In August, embassy officials, reflecting on a change in Soviet policy, noted that the Soviet Union was "exuding good will to Iran"; anti-Shah Soviet propaganda was being relaxed, and a new trade agreement increased exchanges between the two countries by 20 per cent. Alam and Foreign Minister Abbas Aram reassured embassy officials that the Iranian government was "deliberately exploiting these Russian manoeuvres and hope for better relations" in order to further improve trade.[41]

Iranian relations with the Soviet Union continued to improve when Tehran declared that it "will not give to any foreign government the right of establishment on Iranian soil of missile bases of any kind."[42] The declaration was an obvious statement that Iran would not allow the United States to deploy nuclear missiles inside its borders. Although Washington had no plans to position nuclear missiles in Iran, in June 1961 President Kennedy had continued the deployment of intermediate-range ballistic missiles to Turkey agreed to by the Eisenhower administration.[43] Turkey's Jupiter missiles, located so close to Soviet borders, had long been a source of irritation for Moscow, which ultimately contributed to Khrushchev's decision to place nuclear missiles in Cuba.[44] By informing Moscow that it would not allow foreign missile bases on Iranian soil, Tehran sought to ease Soviet–Iranian tensions. Alam was keen to make clear to the US that the declaration did not entail any kind of foreign policy adjustment but "would contribute to the normalisation of relations with Russia which was no change in Iran's position."[45]

The Shah himself informed Julius Holmes that he had "budged not an inch" from the line he had given Khrushchev three years earlier that Iran would not agree to a bilateral agreement with the Soviet Union concerning foreign missile bases.[46] Washington generally saw the declaration along the same lines as expressed by Alam: a useful tool to ease tensions between Iran and the Soviet Union. If anything, they argued, it helped to show Iranians as independent and not merely "US stooges."[47] Although the impact was largely symbolic, in the Shah's eyes it reminded the United States and the Iranian people that Iran's foreign policy was his own. This is not to say that the Shah was turning away from his close relationship with the United States; the Shah's alignment with the West was based both on principle and pragmatism. However, by flirting with

the Soviet Union, the Shah was attempting to elicit greater material, particularly military, assistance from the United States.

The Shah's increasing confidence in the foreign policy realm also provided opportunities for US officials to invoke the paradigm of massage articulated by Robert Komer. Two examples – an Afghanistan–Pakistan border dispute and Iran's application to join the United Nations Security Council – illustrate how the Kennedy administration sought to use the policy of massaging the Shah in order to maintain influence in Tehran and reassure him of American support, particularly in light of Iran's developing rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Moreover, they also demonstrate the pitfalls inherent in such a policy.

When in 1961 a dispute arose between Iran's neighbours Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Kennedy administration saw it as an opportunity to massage the Shah. Washington had an interest in maintaining local harmony between the two countries and initially attempted to mediate a solution so as to facilitate the smooth delivery of the American aid programme in Afghanistan.[48] US officials quickly recognized the delicate nature of the dispute and, wishing to minimize the chance for complicated American entanglement as well as a "hardening of lines" by both the Afghanistan and Pakistan governments, the Kennedy administration withdrew from the discussions to allow the Shah to step in during the summer of 1962.[49] Kennedy sent the Shah a letter wishing him luck and stated that "if you can bring the two sides together, you will have succeeded where we have failed."[50] This kind of language clearly conformed to Komer's call for a policy to bolster the Shah's confidence and reassure him that his regime had the wholehearted support of the Kennedy administration.

The Shah was happy to take on the role of mediator, as eager as Washington to find a peaceful resolution to the border issue.[51] In early July, the Shah visited Pakistan to hold a series of meetings with President Ayub Khan in order to discuss a range of subjects including relations with CENTO, India, and Afghanistan. Taking this opportunity to mediate a resolution to the dispute, the Shah managed to persuade Ayub to re-establish diplomatic relations with Afghanistan.[52] As part of the "massage exercise" Secretary of State Dean Rusk told Ambassador Holmes to inform the Shah that the US was "gratified at his initiative" with Pakistan and Afghanistan.[53] Iran's early success was marred less than a week later when the Afghan ambassador made it clear that the issue was not yet resolved. The Afghanistan government reiterated its demand for Pakistan to reopen the Afghan consular and trade offices in that country within a week.[54]

In tandem with the effort to massage the Shah, the Department of State decided it would be best for the US "to stay in [the] wings and let [the] Iranians have [the] stage" as the negotiations were necessarily delicate in nature.[55] The State Department observed developments with concern, suggesting that the "gap between [the] disputants [was] still considerable and perhaps widening." Ambassador Holmes was urged to warn Iranian officials "against excessive optimism."[56] In August, Rusk feared that while both Pakistan and Afghanistan were showing some flexibility, their basic positions were unmoved and actual progress in resolving the dispute had stalled.[57] This appeared to be confirmed when in December Aram was still trying in vain to get the two nations' foreign ministers to meet with him in Tehran.[58]

It was not until May the following year that an agreement was finally reached between Pakistan and Afghanistan.[59] President Kennedy immediately sent his personal congratulations to the Shah, thanking him for his "long and statesmanlike efforts."[60] The Kennedy administration recognized the importance of this kind of correspondence from the president to the Shah in reassuring the Iranian leader of American interest in and appreciation of Iranian policy. The Kennedy administration thus encouraged the Shah to view regional problems as within his ability to resolve. Although in the Afghanistan–Pakistan dispute it made tactical sense for the US to remain on the sidelines and let the Shah take the lead, the massage policy reinforced the Shah's notion of Iran as a major regional power. The Shah was increasingly ready to offer his advice to the United States on how to resolve other regional disputes, notably the rather larger Kashmir problem between India and Pakistan. The president played a central role by flattering the Shah and writing that he welcomed his "views on the Kashmir dispute, and intend to give them further thought."[61]

The massage policy persuaded the Kennedy administration to indulge the Shah on these kinds of major international issues. Whilst in private US officials might opine that the Shah's "thoughts on the Kashmir dispute are of little value to us," they recommended that he be "encouraged" for recognizing the wider implications of regional disputes.[62] Despite the popular perception that US–Iranian relations had cooled during the Kennedy administration, one can see from the example of the Afghanistan–Pakistan dispute that, in fact, the massage policy helped foster closer ties between Washington and Tehran. The effusive, warm, and encouraging nature of US policy during the dispute was a direct attempt by the Kennedy administration to resolve the massage problem identified by Komer. Its influence can be seen in the Shah's

increasing confidence in regional matters and his ready willingness to proffer advice in later years on issues as varied as the war in Vietnam and the 1967 Six Day War.

Alongside its use of massage regarding the Afghanistan–Pakistan dispute, the Kennedy administration adopted similar methods when in September 1962 the Iranian foreign minister raised with American officials the desire of the Iranian government to be considered for membership of the UN Security Council.[63] The Iranian government felt that Iran deserved to join the Security Council for a number of reasons, including the fact that a number of Western European nations – as well as Turkey, Pakistan, Brazil, and Argentina – supported Tehran's application. In addition, the foreign minister asserted that Iran was "quite disappointed [at] not being chosen [as a] member of [the] disarmament commission." The disarmament commission created by the United Nations in 1962 was designed to discuss and mediate between the United States and Soviet Union on issues of worldwide importance, particularly those of military disarmament and nuclear test controls. The significance of the question of nuclear testing and control had been brought into sharp relief in October 1962 by the Cuban missile crisis. Iran's disappointment at not being asked to participate in the disarmament commission is indicative of Tehran's, and therefore the Shah's, belief that Iran deserved to play a major role on questions of international, not just regional, importance. Moreover, Tehran felt slighted when it was not asked to participate, a situation that was exacerbated by the inclusion on the commission of the United Arab Republic as the only Middle East representative.

Initially, the Kennedy administration did not want to become too heavily embroiled in the issue of Iran's admission to the Security Council. In discussions with Iranian officials, Ambassador Holmes played down the likelihood of US involvement, noting that Iran should seek support from other nations within the Middle East. However, Holmes advised his State Department colleagues to consider supporting the Shah's initiative. He observed that "if in the end the question boils down to Iran versus Morocco [for Security Council membership] I would certainly advocate US support for Iran."[64] Tehran believed that Security Council membership would bestow a certain level of prestige on Iran. For the Shah, prestige was an important aspect of the vision of modernity he wished to pursue for his country. Elsewhere, his modernization programme prioritized grand development projects, such as hydroelectric dams and steel mills, as well as state-of-the-art military equipment, in order to showcase Iran's progress. Similarly, joining the Security Council

would not only demonstrate Iran's significance in international circles, it would confer a degree of prestige on the Pahlavi regime.

By July 1963, Iranian officials complained that US backing was not as overt as it should be considering Iran was one of Washington's few "outright allies" in the Middle East. They suggested that the Kennedy administration ought to do more than simply state that it is "happy to see Iranian candidacies succeed." To all intents and purposes, Iran's Security Council aspirations were an extension of the Shah's ego and ultimately a vanity project aimed at building Iran's prestige. As Dean Rusk commented later, "on foreign policy matters the Shah was the fellow."[65] Therefore, the suggestion made by Holmes that the US "should be willing in appropriate circumstances to use its own influence in [the] UN to strengthen Iranian chances" fitted neatly into the massage paradigm set out by Komer.[66] Even lukewarm support validated the Shah's belief that Iran was becoming a major international actor. However, the absence of any real concrete support frustrated Tehran. The massage policy was, therefore, only useful up to a point: unless it was reinforced by concrete political support, then its impact was limited and actually created problems in the long term. In the case of Iran's aspiration to join the Security Council, the moderate support offered by Washington merely frustrated Iranian officials, who felt justified in blaming the United States for their failure to get Iran onto the Security Council.

Missed Opportunities

The Kennedy administration embraced the massage policy because it was seen as the best means available to the United States for reassuring the Shah of America's friendly intentions. Its widespread acceptance as a fundamental aspect of Washington's policy towards Tehran contributed to a cognitive dissonance within the Kennedy administration that made it difficult for US officials to generate strategies that would be less dependent on the Shah. This, in turn, led to Kennedy missing further opportunities to reconsider the basic tenets of US–Iranian relations and adopt a policy that emphasized political reform alongside economic development. In March 1963 Kennedy asked Secretary of State Dean Rusk to review his administration's Iran policy. Rather than address the problems of relying on one man that the massage paradigm ignored, Kennedy adhered to and reinforced the policy.

On 14 March, Kennedy issued National Security Action Memorandum 228 (NSAM-228). Delivered to Dean Rusk; Robert McNamara; David Bell, the administrator of AID; and John McCone, director of the CIA,

NSAM-228 sought to collate the views of different departments in order to review the administration's current policy towards Iran. Where previously Kennedy had been content to leave the direction of Iran policy prey to the quarrels between different departments, distracted as he was by numerous crises around the world, he now chose to intervene more directly.

Central to the president's renewed interest was his concern that the present "strategy for moving Iran toward more effective solutions to its crucial internal problems," alongside the use of military support, was struggling to make tangible progress. Kennedy instructed the State Department, "in consultation with other appropriate agencies," to produce a review that considered the following three points:

> (a) analysis of the results achieved to date under our current policy, including the status of local development efforts and military force reductions; (b) our estimate of the likely course of events in Iran; and (c) recommendations, if any, for adaptation or revision of current strategy and programs in this key country.[67]

The first two issues raised – assessment of the success of US policy and a forecast of future developments within Iran – were not especially remarkable. They represented a natural desire on the part of the president to discover whether his policy could be deemed a success and how the internal politics of Iran would affect it. It was Kennedy's request for "recommendations, if any, for adaptation or revision of current strategy" which opened up the possibility of a change in policy. Although the wording here – "recommendations, *if any*," "adaptation or revision" but not rejection – did not suggest that a full-scale reversal of policy was imminent; Kennedy was giving his advisors the chance to alter Washington's relations with Tehran.

NSAM-228 was a significant moment in US policy towards Iran for the Kennedy administration, as it signalled the first opportunity for a serious reconsideration of policy since the initial Task Force on Iran was created by JFK in 1961. In addition to the three points noted above, Kennedy included a number of questions to guide Dean Rusk and his colleagues in their deliberations, which illuminate the president's concerns. The first and last – of seven – questions reiterated the general purpose of NSAM-228: "Is the thrust of existing US policy toward Iran still basically valid?…[and] If our existing policy and programs are no longer satisfactory, what changes should be made to produce better results?" The significance of the missed opportunity that NSAM-228

represented is illustrated by these two simple questions. Kennedy clearly stated that he was open to accepting the notion that the current policy was no longer "basically valid" and/or that "changes should be made" to more efficiently secure American interests. Given this statement, it is reasonable to assume that had Rusk recommended a significant change in policy, Kennedy would have considered realigning US–Iranian relations.

Written in response to Kennedy's request for a review, Special National Intelligence Estimate 34-63 (SNIE 34-63) attempted to "assess the situation in Iran and probable internal developments during the next few years."[68] SNIE 34-63's analysis reinforced the general acceptance inside Washington of the Shah's rule that had gradually gained currency during the Kennedy years. Recognizing that over the last year "The Shah [had] reasserted [his] strong personal leadership" over Iranian politics, it posited that "his chances of remaining in control are good and he may even be able to make some modest political and economic progress."[69] By arguing that the Shah was likely to remain in power, SNIE 34-63 helped to validate the Kennedy administration's strategy of embracing the Shah through the massage policy.

Although the report did not make any specific policy recommendations, it contributed to an overall atmosphere within policymaking circles that made it difficult for officials to view US policy towards Iran without giving the Shah prominence. In this way, SNIE 34-63 acted alongside the massage policy to create a situation in which it was increasingly difficult to formulate or even envisage any policy that did not give wholehearted support to the Shah's regime. The final paragraph of SNIE 34-63 contained perhaps the most revealing remarks. Noting that the Shah was likely to remain pro-Western in his foreign policy "at least as long as the Shah believes that he can continue to rely on the US to support him personally and protect Iran's national security," the authors wrote that "[t]he Shah is not a man to take direction readily from outside sources…and the degree to which Iranian developments can be influenced by foreign advice will probably remain small."[70] This assessment reinforced the basic tenets of the massage policy by stating that explicit American avowals of support were necessary to maintain the Shah's friendly attitude towards the US.

Moreover, it was acknowledged that American influence over the Shah was diminishing and therefore unlikely to be heeded. According to this assumption, the Kennedy administration's policy of subtle advice alongside repeated diplomatic massage was unlikely to yield results, as the Shah was not likely to respond positively to advice. At the same

time, however, the public nature of the massage policy was tightening the association of the Shah's regime with the United States. Iranian critics of the Shah therefore tended to be critics of the United States too for its role in supporting the Pahlavi regime. Considering this kind of analysis, NSAM-228 was a perfect opportunity for the State Department to suggest an alternative policy that might either disassociate the US from the Shah and/or increase the level of American influence over the Shah's development programme.

The review that Dean Rusk gave to President Kennedy in April missed this opportunity to revise, reverse, or redirect US policy. The Secretary of State's report noted that the Shah felt Iran's internal security was greatly improved and had therefore turned his domestic attention towards his White Revolution. Like SNIE 34-63, Rusk noted that the Shah's land reform programme was having some success in appealing to the rural masses but was dramatically undercutting the traditional support the Pahlavi dynasty received from the landowning aristocracy. The review concluded that current US policy could "be sharpened and made more effective." Rusk detailed seven specific points on which the United States could improve its policy. However, these were a combination of vague proposals and continuity disguised as new recommendations.

The review's suggestion to "give timely and appropriate support to the major elements of the Shah's reform program" did not specify what would be considered "appropriate support" nor divulge how this differed from previous policy. Some recommendations were more specific, such as the idea to "encourage the government of Iran to loosen up its conservative fiscal policies," but did not deviate from the last two years of American economic policy. The final measures recommending Washington, in conjunction with Tehran, "monitor" and "review" Iran's military expenditure and expansion were similarly nothing new. Indeed, these seven "specific steps" for improving policy were overshadowed by the report's – and Rusk's – stated belief that "our present broad policy of support and encouragement of the Shah and his reform program is correct."[71] As Philips Talbot later noted, the review was ultimately "just a justification of the line we were on with not much change."[72]

Conclusion

By the time the Kennedy administration came to a close with JFK's untimely death in November 1963, a massage policy had been set in place that was adhered to by subsequent administrations until the Shah was overthrown in 1979. In contrast to the divisions that defined the

question of modernization theory, it was embraced by policymakers throughout the government. Robert Komer, an arch critic of the Shah, articulated the paradigm whilst his erstwhile sparring partner, Julius Holmes, unreservedly accepted its principles. However, even as this consensus served to perpetuate the massage policy, it was unable to overcome the policy's inherent limitations. Moreover, policymakers focused their attention on the massage problem to the detriment of other issues.

While the basic tenets of modernization theory were still accepted by most American officials, the need to resolve the massage problem in order to maintain close ties with the Shah superseded considerations of Iranian development. The emphasis placed on massaging the Shah, combined with the incoherence over the question of modernization, led to the United States prioritizing political stability over development, national security interests over reformist rhetoric. Although long seen as the president least inclined to align with the Pahlavi regime, Kennedy actually reinforced ties between Washington and Tehran, in spite – and perhaps because – of his misgivings about the Shah. After all, it was the Shah's nervous disposition and tendency to waiver that caused Robert Komer to advocate the massage policy in the first place.

Despite obvious drawbacks to the policy – such as raising Iranian expectations – Kennedy continued to massage the Shah in his final weeks in office. In late 1963, US officials sent a letter to the Shah in order to offset any damage that might be caused by president of France Charles de Gaulle's visit to Tehran. Julius Holmes drafted the letter and suggested JFK invite "the Shah's consultation" on matters of vital geopolitical significance, including the Test Ban Treaty, the state of Soviet bloc nations, and the question of Sino-Soviet relations. The last page in particular descended into an archetype of the massage policy, expressing the president's "admiration" for the Shah's many achievements.[73] Given Holmes' long-standing attitude regarding the Shah, the nature of this draft is hardly surprising. Robert Komer's dismissive reaction to the tone of Holmes' letter was equally predictable. In presenting it to the president, Komer described it as a "long rather gooey letter to the Shah," which before he amended it "read like an eighteenth century diplomatic note."[74] Komer informed Bundy that he had "done major editorial surgery…but have left [the] letter long because this counts so with our Mideast friends."[75]

However, despite Komer's changes, the finished product retained some major features of the original, not least of which was the length, which, as Komer suggested, was an important element in appealing to the Shah's ego. By discussing matters of grave international importance – the Test

Ban Treaty, Berlin, the Sino-Soviet schism – the new letter, delivered on 7 November 1963, gave the impression that Iran was almost equal to the United States on the international scene; a favoured ally whose advice was always welcome, no matter the subject. Although the letter reiterated that Iran ought to focus its attention on maintaining its economic development rather than increasing its military, the message was undermined by the steady stream of positive reinforcement the Shah received from the White House that his policies were on "the right track." Kennedy's letter furthered this trend by noting his "deep sense…that history is moving with us [i.e., the US and Iran, JFK and the Shah]."[76]

This final letter from Kennedy to the Shah, sent only two weeks before the president's death, repeated the administration's use of massage and underlined Washington's embrace of the Shah. In spite of some significant differences between Komer and Holmes, it also highlighted the consensus that had come to pervade the Kennedy administration about the need to massage the Shah to further American security interests. Furthermore, Kennedy's assertion that he and the Shah were both on the same side – the right side – of history undermines prevailing assumptions that the relationship between the two leaders was distant and cool. The fact that one of the Shah's most vocal critics, Robert Komer, had by the end of 1963 declared Iran the one "bright spot" in the region is illustrative of the evolving US position regarding the Shah.[77] Whilst Kennedy and the Shah may not have expressed much affection for each other in their private moments, the ties between Washington and Tehran during the few years of the Kennedy administration were still strong, in large part due to the massage policy.

JFK had in many ways hitched America's cart to the Shah's horse, an arrangement with which his successor, Lyndon Johnson, was only too happy to comply. Moreover, the imperatives that drove the massage policy ensured that issues of modernization and development were put to one side by the Kennedy administration. Indeed, Chapter 4 will demonstrate that the principles of the massage policy reverberated long after Kennedy's death, even as modernization's influence continued to decline. Rather than push the Shah on questions of economic and political development, the Johnson administration sought to perpetuate the close ties between Washington and Tehran by placating the Shah's ego on a number of thorny issues that threatened to disrupt US–Iranian relations.

4
Lyndon Johnson, the Shah, and Iranian Opposition

In June 1964, the Shah returned to the United States to meet with the new American president, Lyndon Johnson. It was a welcome opportunity for Johnson to reacquaint himself with the Shah, having met him as vice president when he visited Tehran in 1962. Overall, the visit went much better for the Shah than when he had met JFK, with Johnson agreeing to sell Tehran sophisticated military equipment in addition to continuing its Military Assistance Programme through until 1969. However, as the Shah was collecting an honourary degree from University of California, Los Angeles, his satisfaction quickly turned to irritation. During the ceremony, a plane hired by a dissident Iranian student group flew over the area carrying a banner that read, "If you want a fix, see the Shah." Initially confused, the Shah asked his companions, "What is a fix?" Upon being told it was a reference to the drug heroin, he bitterly remarked, "If I am involved in heroin…one should say that I am a terribly poor salesman and that I am working against my 'sales interest.'"[1] Despite all the positives of the visit, this incident ended it on a slightly sour note.

In fact, this was not the only example of student protest against the Shah during his trip to America. Throughout the 1960s, the Iranian Students Association (ISA), working alongside other predominantly leftist student groups, orchestrated dozens of demonstrations against the Pahlavi regime. These groups were also highly critical of the nature of the US–Iranian relationship, arguing that Washington's support for the Shah helped prop up the Pahlavi autocracy and stifle basic political freedoms inside Iran. For his part, the Shah could not fathom how the Johnson administration was unable – or unwilling – to silence the ISA and its supporters, especially given the close relationship between Washington and Tehran. This chapter examines how Iranian student activists at first strained relations between the Shah and the Johnson administration but

ultimately ended up inadvertently strengthening US–Iranian relations, compounding their lack of success in gaining American support for their cause.

At the same time that Iranians in America were creating problems for Lyndon Johnson, the presence of thousands of Americans in Iran caused concern in Tehran. The conclusion in October 1964 of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) granting American military personnel and their dependents the equivalent to diplomatic immunity was greeted with consternation by the Iranian public. Widespread opposition to the SOFA was exacerbated by the almost simultaneous agreement of a $200 million credit deal to help fund the Shah's military. The most prominent figure to denounce the US–Iranian relationship during this period was a leading anti-Shah cleric named Ruohollah Khomeini. Despite the regime's efforts to silence him, Khomeini's rhetoric cultivated a new source of opposition among the largely working-class religious masses. Both the Shah's government and the Johnson administration, focused as they were on how to maintain their own close relationship, chose to ignore the significance of this new opposition and its potential impact on the long-term solvency of the Pahlavi regime.

This chapter explains how Johnson's policies echoed those of John F. Kennedy by sidelining issues of modernization in favour of pursuing strong ties with the Shah in order to maintain Iranian stability and achieve US national security goals in the region. It goes on to consider the juxtaposition of Iranian students in America and American personnel in Iran to assess their respective impact on US–Iranian relations in the mid-1960s. To paraphrase the British diplomat Desmond Harney, the Johnson administration spent much of its energy doing "fire control over trivial things" in its relationship with Iran.[2] More importantly, Harney's observation reinforces the sense that more than anything else it was the Shah's personality that was setting the tone of US–Iranian relations. Furthermore, by spending its early years fighting these fires, the Johnson administration neglected the question of modernization, implicitly accepting the Shah's vision of modernity for Iran. The Johnson administration's policy of sidelining questions of development, using military credit as a means of maintaining close relations with Tehran, and seeking to placate the Shah's personality on a number of issues showed remarkable continuity from the Kennedy years. It also defined a pattern that would be followed by the Nixon administration as modernization's influence over US policy declined irrevocably and arms sales were placed at the heart of the US–Iranian relationship.

Perspectives of Lyndon Johnson

As vice president, Lyndon Johnson had not really fitted in with the Kennedy administration's activist intellectuals; it was widely believed that LBJ's frequent trips abroad were merely designed to keep him out of harm's way.[3] Despite the occasional disconnect between Johnson and the "Harvards," the new president retained the vast majority of officials in order to reassure the American people and the world that "there was leadership and purpose and continuity" in the United States government.[4] US policy towards Iran during Johnson's early years exhibited a strong level of continuity from the Kennedy administration helped in no small part by the influence of Kennedy-era officials, such as Robert Komer, Harold Saunders, Dean Rusk, and Julius Holmes.

Since the late 1960s, assessments of Lyndon Johnson's foreign policy have tended to revolve around one of two things: his personality or Vietnam.[5] In seeking to explain the failure of LBJ's foreign policies, many historians have focused on his complex personality, highlighting his many contradictions – "brave and brutal, compassionate and cruel, incredibly intelligent and infuriatingly insensitive" – either to condemn or defend him.[6] More recently, scholars have sought to go "beyond Vietnam" in assessing Johnson's foreign relations in order to offer a corrective to the – largely – damning critiques his Vietnam policies have received.[7]

However, it is Irving Bernstein's *Guns or Butter* thesis that remains most pertinent to US–Iranian relations in this period.[8] Bernstein argues that the omnipresence of the war in Vietnam "squeezed out reform" and forced LBJ to favour military expenditure over development-oriented policies. This chapter adapts Bernstein's premise to argue that the president's focus on maintaining close ties with the Shah "squeezed out" modernization theory. Johnson's priorities, like those of Kennedy and later Nixon, came to emphasize stability and security through military arms sales at the expense of reform and economic development. Although the trend of relying heavily upon the Shah had begun under JFK, it was accelerated by Johnson as Washington sought to ensure Iran's stability by providing extensive military credits to the Shah at the same time that Tehran's reliance on American economic assistance was declining.

Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 had shocked both American and Iranian society, and Lyndon Johnson sought to alleviate anxiety on both sides by following the path set by his predecessor. The new administration's major concerns continued to be Iran's strategic importance and internal stability; Washington sought to maintain good

relations with Tehran by providing economic and military assistance, which was also designed to give the United States some influence over the Shah's policies and to keep him closely aligned with the West. Johnson continued the Kennedy-era practice of massaging the Shah's ego and encouraged him on a number of international projects in order to reassure him of America's continued support.

In contrast to his predecessor, Johnson has been criticized by some scholars for the closeness of his relationship with the Shah, which Ambassador Armin Meyer described as reflecting their "deep friendship and respect."[9] James Bill in particular has chastised Johnson for his tendency to be enamoured by Third World dictators, suggesting he "basked in the spotlight of power…The more power, pomp and circumstance, the more impressed Johnson was. The Shah of Iran, therefore, was an extremely attractive and important figure to Johnson."[10] Of particular importance was Johnson's vice-presidential trip to Iran where he "developed a personal relationship with the Shah," which meant that, according to Bill, "it was his relationship with the Shah and not his understanding of the Iranian people that determined Johnson's foreign policy toward Iran."[11]

Whilst this assessment may hold some truth, it can also be applied to every American president who dealt with Iran during the Cold War. No administration had a comprehensive understanding of Iran's problems or the Iranian people's aspirations. Indeed, by the time JFK took office, dealing with Iran by definition meant dealing with the Shah. Both Kennedy and Johnson sought to massage the Shah, congratulated him on minor or controversial successes and encouraged his grandiose schemes designed to elevate Iranian prestige.

Moreover, US officials who attended Johnson's meetings in Tehran with the Shah have suggested that "it was obvious that no great rapport was established."[12] While a fair assessment would be to suggest that Johnson was closer to the Shah than Kennedy had been, the policies of their administrations were not too dissimilar. More importantly, this chapter will argue that United States policy towards Iran during the Johnson administration was determined less by LBJ's alleged affection for the Shah and more by American assessments of the Shah's own personality. Historians of US foreign policy occasionally have a tendency to assume that as American personalities are usually the focus of their studies they must naturally be the most significant. However, as the Johnson administration's response to the Shah's complaints about Iranian students and dissidents demonstrated, the dominant personality shaping US–Iranian relations throughout the 1960s belonged to the Shah.

Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah

The Johnson administration decided that in light of the "Shah's resultant nervousness" following Kennedy's assassination, it might be useful if he made an informal visit in June 1964.[13] Robert Komer urged Johnson to meet with the Shah because, as he put it, the US "position in Iran depends largely on this nervous monarch…[and] he's always responded well to the friendly massage [policy]."[14] The Shah's visit was therefore seen by the Johnson administration as an opportunity to reassure the Iranian leader of Washington's favourable attitude and reinforce ties with Iran. However, in recent years the United States had acquired a sizeable population of visiting Iranian students, most of whom opposed the dictatorial policies of the Pahlavi regime and throughout the 1960s took the opportunity to hold demonstrations against the Shah's rule whenever he visited America.

The Shah's economic policies and autocratic nature had begun to alienate thousands of Iranian students.[15] In the United States, Iranian student groups conducted protests, embassy sit-ins, leafleting campaigns, and petitioned American politicians for support in order to disrupt the Shah's visits and raise awareness of their cause. As the historian Matthew Shannon has pointed out, rather than sympathizing with the students' concerns, the Johnson administration viewed their activities as an "impediment to forging a stronger alliance with the Shah of Iran."[16] The Shah was himself increasingly irritated by these Iranian student groups and also with the US government for failing to curb their opposition activities, adding tension to the otherwise close relationship between Washington and Tehran. In light of its inability, or unwillingness in some departments, to prevent the Iranian student campaigns, the Johnson administration was forced to placate the Shah using other diplomatic means. Most notably this included the extension of credits in 1964 to help bolster Iran's growing military capacity.

Despite modernization's declining influence over actual US policy, many American officials continued to view Iran's internal development as an important component in the country's inoculation against communist and other radical elements. The State Department believed that the Shah's White Revolution had some limited successes – particularly the health and education corps, enfranchisement of women, and elements of land reform – but that it had also served to alienate "the landlords and conservative clergy which had formed the principal base of [the Shah's] support, but failed to overcome the pre-existing opposition of the pro-Mosadeqist 'nationalists.'"[17] The Iranian government was

failing to create a significant level of support for its policies and continued to antagonize those who advocated the development of democracy, including the thousands of Iranian students residing in the United States.

The State Department praised the Shah's sincerity in advocating reforms but noted that "he is also acutely conscious of the effect of the reforms on world opinion, particularly in the US…[and] is apt to exaggerate greatly their success and to confuse promise with fulfilment." US officials also stressed the importance of seeing these reforms as "only a beginning" and used the United States' own internal problems, "such as poverty and race relations," to illustrate the need for continual modernization.[18] However, like his predecessor, Johnson discovered that the importance of maintaining close ties with Iran meant that even pragmatic ideals such as modernization often had to be abandoned in favour of efforts to keep on friendly terms with the Shah. The opposition of Iranian students during the Shah's visits to America threatened to create tension between Washington and Tehran, which needed to be resolved in order to maintain close relations.

In preparation for the Shah's visit, a CIA report reinforced prevailing views of the Shah, describing him "as a sensitive, often moody, but nonetheless able proponent of the modernization of his country – *under his direction*."[19] US officials clearly recognized that in the contest over modernization in Iran, the Shah was determined to pursue his own agenda. The brief period at the beginning of the Kennedy administration when it looked as though the United States would seek to impose an American version of modernity on the Shah had long since passed. Indeed, Washington's ability to influence the direction of the Shah's domestic policies had declined considerably.

In discussing the Iranian opposition, the report suggested that due to the Shah's reforms, anti-regime sections of society were in a difficult "position of trying to oppose the Shah while avoiding opposition to a popular program with which he is personally identified."[20] It was felt that even whilst some younger elements of the middle classes in Iran were now more likely to align themselves with the Shah, the same could not be said of Iranian students in the United States. The majority of these were "genuinely disturbed by the 'dictatorship,' by the omnipresence of the security police, and probably by their own sense of frustration" at Iranian society's slow progress towards change; these students, the report warned, "are likely to cause trouble during [the Shah's visit]."[21] As it turned out, the CIA was right; significant numbers of Iranian students who lived in America were deeply committed to opposing the Pahlavi

regime and coordinated their efforts to disrupt the many visits the Shah made to the US during the 1960s.

During the 20th century, Iran had a large and growing youth population that increasingly looked abroad for opportunities to attend higher education institutions in order to improve their prospects at home and, in some cases, escape the stifling political atmosphere that prevented most forms of opposition. Shannon has written that "Iranian students abroad were unofficial ambassadors who petitioned US officials, protested at strategically selected times and locations, and forged momentary internationalist bonds with New Leftists in the United States and Western Europe." In doing so, Shannon concludes, "Iranian students amassed one of the most impressive movements of the 1960s."[22] As it was for many students from the Middle East, the United States was the favoured destination for thousands of Iranians.

Although the most dramatic increase in the numbers of Iranians visiting the United States came after the upheaval of the revolution in 1979, thousands had entered the country since 1950, approximately one-fifth of whom were students.[23] The 1960s saw these figures increase from 997 students being admitted to the US at the beginning of the decade to 4,053 in 1972.[24] Estimates suggest that between 1957 and 1977 more than 30,000 Iranian students entered the United States, eclipsing those from other Middle Eastern countries.[25] Most of these Iranian students clustered in the larger university cities, such as Washington, DC, San Francisco, and New York, but activist groups were also found in smaller cities across America, such as El Paso in Texas.[26]

As the 20th century progressed, the large numbers of students outside Iran became a major issue for the Iranian government. Jerrold D. Green has pointed out that "only 7 percent of the 325,731 Iranians completing degrees abroad between 1950 and 1968 returned home."[27] The reluctance of these students to return home contributed to the so-called 'brain drain,' a phenomenon experienced by many countries in the Middle East; for example, in 1967 trained Iranian doctors who remained in the United States numbered approximately one-fifth of the total doctors practising in Iran.[28] Moreover, as was the case for students across the world, the 1960s was a time of rapid and widespread politicization for Iranian students in America.[29]

One former student recalled that during this time and increasingly through the 1970s, "the mood – not just among Iranians, but among American and European students – was revolutionary…The revolutionary cant and romantic atmosphere were infectious, and the Iranian students were at the forefront of the struggle."[30] US officials, on the

other hand, viewed the majority of Iranian students as politically apathetic, but "a small minority, however, are politically active and have taken advantage of freedom in this country to organize and publicize their opposition to the regime of the Shah."[31] These groups of politically active Iranians formed a number of student organizations across the United States, the largest of which was the Iranian Students Association (ISA).

The ISA had branches in many major cities throughout the country, including Washington, DC, Los Angeles, and New York, and was closely aligned with the political and democratic aspirations of the opposition National Front movement back in Iran.[32] Many ISA members had been politicized as teenagers during the Mossadeq era. One former student activist recalled that "when we thought about politics, [the prevailing objective] was restoration or recreation of the political environment we had witnessed and experienced" in the early 1950s. Many student activists felt themselves further "galvanized, encouraged" by Ali Amini's rise to power in 1961, which they saw as an opportunity to return to the democratic ideals espoused by Mossadeq.[33] During the 1960s, the ISA gained publicity by organizing a number of protests against the Shah when he visited the United States as well as regular demonstrations outside Iranian embassies and the UN headquarters in New York.[34]

At first, student demonstrations were not necessarily anti-Shah, nor was there a universal call for the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime. Recalling an ISA convention held at Berkeley in 1962 attended by over 250 people, Mansur Farhang, a former student activist, noted that apart from the Tudeh-oriented factions who explicitly opposed the Shah, "the language was extremely mild and moderate – very little, for example, direct attack on the Shah."[35] According to Farhang, the overall "work of the convention and the orientation of the students was not anti-regime as such at all."[36] However, as the decade continued, the ISA became increasingly concerned by the persecution of anti-regime National Front and student activists inside Iran.[37] There was a feeling that due to the extent of the Shah's control of political expression, "the opposition political scene [in Iran] was dead," but the United States provided the freedom to reinvigorate protests "inspired by what was happening in Iran."[38]

The ISA also forged alliances with Iranian student groups based in Europe, such as the Confederation of Iranian Students.[39] Further capitalizing on the transnational nature of student and New Left activism, Iranian student associations worked with other US-based organizations in opposition to the Pahlavi regime. For instance, the Union of Iranian

Students of El Paso (UIS) collaborated with the Chicano rights organization Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, who through the late 1960s and especially in the late 1970s "provided critical support and solidarity for the UIS anti-imperialist struggle."[40] This kind of transnational collaboration helped raise the profile of Iranian issues outside Iran.

The political opposition of these Iranian student groups became a source of irritation for the Shah, and efforts were made by the Iranian government to suppress their activity. By 1970, Iranian students "became more fully aware of the activities of the Iranian secret service, SAVAK, both inside and outside Iran."[41] As Ali Gheissari has noted, "although SAVAK could not put the same degree of pressure and control on the Iranian students in foreign countries as on the students at home, they kept a close watch on them."[42] Using less clandestine methods than their counterparts in SAVAK, Iranian diplomats attempted to make use of their contacts with American officials to exert pressure on student activists to modify their anti-regime behaviour.

During a discussion in April 1964 about the Shah's impending visit to California, the Iranian foreign minister Abbas Aram expressed concern that Iranian students might attempt to disrupt planned events. Aram stated that "the Iranian student problem could not be dismissed lightly" and could have a "possible [negative] effect on US–Iranian relations."[43] The Iran desk of the Bureau of Near East Asian Affairs within the State Department shared Aram's concerns. In a letter to Raymond F. Farrell, commissioner for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the deputy administrator of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, Charles H. Mace, argued that "these dissident Iranians are seriously undermining the base of confidence necessary [for continuing good relations] between Iran and the United States."[44] Reports in local newspapers of the possibility that rogue Iranian students might attempt to assassinate the Shah while he was on American soil did little to ease State Department concerns.[45] An FBI investigation discovered that an Iranian student had recently purchased a "high powered rifle," which only exacerbated tension within Washington.[46]

Despite these fears, further investigations by the FBI uncovered little enthusiasm for such violent tactics among ISA members. When interviewed, one student remarked that "to do so would be ridiculous, as the Shah is just one man and he would be replaced by another who might not be any better."[47] Members of the ISA told FBI investigators that the association's purpose during the Shah's visit was not to assassinate him but to "awaken the American people to the conditions in Iran…and the fact that the Shah is a dictator."[48] The importance of appealing to the

American public was highlighted by the feeling within the ISA that "a change in government may come about when the United States stops giving aid and assistance to the Shah as happened to the government of South Vietnam."[49] According to the ISA, Washington clearly held some responsibility for the repressive nature of the Pahlavi regime due to the economic and military assistance it furnished.

The focus of the ISA's attention during the visit, apart from the Shah himself, of course, was on the University of California and the American University in Washington that were both conferring honourary degrees upon the Iranian leader. In an open letter to Hurst R. Anderson, the president of the American University, the ISA expressed its dismay that such a decoration was to be given to a monarch who suppressed freedom of expression and academic freedom and only one year previously had given "shoot-to-kill" orders to put down opposition to his government's reform programme. The letter concluded that "to confer a degree on the Shah would be no less cynical than to offer one to Hitler, a Franco, a Salazar, or to come closer to home, a Joseph McCarthy."[50] The ISA's efforts were also supported by the International Federation for Narcotic Education who wrote to Clark Kerr, the president of the University of California, urging him to reconsider granting the Shah an honourary degree on the grounds that it would reward a monarch who has done little "except to bring death and now narcotic addiction to the people of Iran."[51] The ISA also emphasized the transnational nature of their struggle by appealing to other activist groups in America, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Organization of Arab Students in the United States, arguing "that man's longing for truth and liberty knows no political boundaries."[52]

Concerned that protests by Iranian students would jeopardize Washington's relations with Tehran, the Johnson administration applied a variety of methods to prevent unwanted disruption during the Shah's visit. Mace recommended that the INS begin deportation proceedings for two prominent non-student dissidents as an example to others and warn students to behave properly at any demonstrations. Illustrating the deep unease within the State Department about the possible damage these students might do to US relations with the Shah, Mace suggested that a previous warning "should now be extended to include other than peaceful demonstrations such as the display of signs bearing messages *insulting to* or threatening [the Shah]…or inciting to violence against his person."[53] That the warning went so far as to prohibit not just "threatening" but "insulting" messages demonstrated the anxiety among US officials about the impact student demonstrations might have on relations

with Tehran. The apprehension expressed within Washington revealed the extent to which the Johnson administration adhered to the Kennedy administration's policy of massage. Where the Kennedy administration's massage policy had sought to bolster the Shah's confidence, Mace's advice acknowledged the fragile nature of the Iranian monarch's ego; compliments might ingratiate Washington with the Shah, but it was feared that insults even by non-government, non-American actors might damage the warm US–Iranian relationship.

The State Department also worked with the FBI to keep a close eye on the ISA. This was usual practice for when heads of state visited the United States if the activities of opposition groups were seen as possible threats. The collaboration between the two departments involved the FBI passing information about ISA members and plans to the State Department. Given the ISA's growing enthusiasm for anti-Shah activities, the FBI continued to work with the State Department even when the Shah was not due for a visit. In December 1963, for instance, the FBI informed officials in the State Department about a moderate splinter group, Iran House, that had recently been set up and was being monitored by FBI agents.[54] Influential officials, such as Robert Komer and Philips Talbot, also met with General Hassan Pakravan, the new head of SAVAK, who was worried by the problems posed by the Iranian students.[55]

Despite these efforts to collect information and the threat of deportation, Iranian students still protested against the Shah during his visit in June. ISA demonstrations received support primarily from New Leftist groups, such as the Young Socialist Alliance, the Youth Action Union, and the Marxist-oriented Du Bois Club of Los Angeles.[56] Despite the passionate nature of the student opposition, the ISA's activities received relatively little press attention. A few very short articles containing information about anti-Shah protests were published during the Shah's visit to the United States in 1964.[57] Others downplayed the anti-Shah protests in favour of casting the Shah in a more positive light, or, in one case, only acknowledging them alongside pro-Shah protests but with the headline "Students Hail Shah of Iran at Airport."[58] The *New York Times* seemed to attempt to delegitimize the efforts of the ISA by reporting the official Iranian claim that the student protestors were in fact not Iranian at all but Egyptian, and, moreover, recruited for five dollars each.[59] The refutation of this rumour by one student leader was limited to a single paragraph the following day.[60] More typical of the media's coverage of Iranian matters was the adulation found in an article entitled "Iran's Royal Reformer," which portrayed the Shah as a leading proponent of modernization in the Middle East and marvelled at his finest

accomplishments; not even his election as captain of his school's soccer team was too minor to mention.[61] The news media's selective coverage was illustrated by the fact that it was left to an Iranian professor of physics, in a letter to the *New York Times,* to note the irony of Iranian students demonstrating outside a university building whilst inside the Shah received an honourary degree and praise for sending Iranians to study in America.[62]

Despite this lack of media coverage, the extent of Iranian student activity opposing the Shah's visit deeply concerned both US and Iranian officials. Washington attempted to limit their effectiveness by controlling demonstrations, conducting FBI investigations into known activists' intentions, and threatening to deport those deemed particularly troublesome. For the Shah, however, this was not enough; Tehran struggled to understand how the United States could allow these groups to openly attack such a close ally. The Johnson administration's inability to silence the student critics during the Shah's visit put US officials in the position of attempting to control the diplomatic fallout engendered by the activities of the ISA and others by responding more favourably to some of the Shah's other demands. Johnson's inability to control the student problem decreased his leverage over the Shah even further, creating a situation whereby the US felt it needed to placate the Shah's rising frustration. Given the fact that the Johnson administration's priority in Iran, like that of Kennedy, was its stability and security, the greatest means of influence available was the extension of military credits, which appealed to the Shah's unquenchable desire for a modernized military.

Modernization or Military Sales

Although discussions during the Shah's visit revolved around the issue of arms sales, Iran's economic development was still a concern for the Johnson administration. It was felt that Iran's economy, whilst benefiting from increased oil revenue, still suffered from "bottlenecks" that prevented "rapid economic development," particularly in private investment.[63] Even so, as Iran's oil production increased, the support it received from the US Agency for International Development (AID) decreased, meaning military assistance continued to be an integral method of maintaining influence with the Shah.

A background paper prepared for the Shah's visit highlighted three objectives for US military assistance towards Iran: "besides the improvement of Iran's defensive capacity; (a) holding down the size and expense of Iran's armed forces to prevent damage to Iran's economic

development, (b) maintaining the friendship and confidence of the Shah, and (c) assisting the United States balance of payments position."[64] It was also noted that as Iran's oil income increased, the Shah would become less reliant on US assistance "to prevent damage to Iran's economic development." This assertion suggests that the second priority, keeping the Shah friendly, was a more important objective than using military assistance to hold down Iran's military expenditure and facilitate the economic development necessary for modernization. The Johnson administration was also keen to "maintain the United States' position as primary military supplier to Iran," which would "open…the door to a continuing United States role in Iranian arms purchases for hard currency in the years ahead."[65] The modernization of Iran was thus subjugated to the Cold War imperative of sustaining friendly relations with the Shah and the provision of a viable outlet for military sales.

Even so, US officials continued to utilize the rhetoric of modernization when dealing with the Shah. Reiterating the importance of psychological factors and reminiscent of the "massage" advice given to John F. Kennedy, Robert Komer told LBJ that "a good personal relationship between you and the Shah is more and more essential to our influence in Iran." With the candour that is typical of Komer's memos, he complained that "though we've kept telling the Shah that his real problems are internal not external, and that reform is first on the agenda, he keeps reverting to the military toys he loves."[66] According to Komer, it was essential to "convince the Shah that he's only begun the modernization process" and to "keep his nose to the grindstone."[67] Komer suggested telling the Shah that "modernization is a never-ending process…look at our renewal and poverty problems."[68]

For the Shah, the question of military purchases was, as ever, at the top of his list of priorities. The American embassy in Tehran highlighted the Shah's desire to purchase new tanks, advising that "if we can be forthcoming on tanks during Shah's visit, our relations with Iran will be greatly strengthened and success of visit assured."[69] Rusk suggested that the president use the opportunity to discuss tank sales, while at the same time suggesting that "the threat to Iran's border provinces [was] *more political and psychological than military* and counsel *internal development measures*."[70] Clearly, the Johnson administration continued to have some faith in the efficacy of modernization as a means of increasing Iran's stability, and thus its security. However, the reality of the US–Iranian relationship was such that, due to the Shah's "dissatisfaction" with how the United States was dealing with anti-regime students residing in America and Tehran's focus on military modernization,

development issues were overshadowed by the need to maintain close ties with the Shah.[71]

The question of economic development was raised briefly during the Shah's visit in his meeting on 6 June. Chairman of the Policy Planning Council (PPC) Walt Rostow argued that work was still needed on the modernization of Iran's economy, advising in particular that central industries focus on producing goods that would meet the aspirations of farmers and agricultural workers, such as farming equipment and machinery.[72] The Shah agreed with the need to coordinate agricultural and industrial output in order to meet his people's growing aspirations and seek technical advice and loans from AID and the Export Import Bank. The Johnson administration's concept of modernization, supported wholeheartedly by Rostow, envisaged military modernization alongside economic development to ensure internal stability, whilst political development was ignored. Despite the noise made by Iranian students whilst the Shah was in America, little effort was made by the Johnson administration to encourage the Shah towards the political reforms that would appease the student movement.

Instead, the modernization of Iran's military was seen as more important as it played to the Shah's personal obsession with improving Iran's military prominence in the region and thus acted as a carrot by which US officials hoped to influence him on economic development. During his meetings with State and Defence Department officials, the Shah focused his attention on Iran's military modernization. The discussions centred upon whether to sell Iran modified M-48 tanks, which were still being used by the US army, or M-60s, which the Shah preferred despite costing around $100,000 more per tank. In the end, McNamara authorized the sale of the M-60s at a reduced price, overruling both Komer and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs Frank Sloan, who had advocated sticking to the M-48s.[73]

This development was met with some concern by Komer, who did not so much object to the sale of M-60s as he did the decision to do so without gaining "an agreed ceiling" on Iran's military expenditure as a *quid pro quo*.[74] Komer expressed his lack of faith in defence and embassy attempts to reach an agreement on a ceiling with the government of Iran and argued that the NSC staff, Bureau of Budget, and AID were better placed to make progress on the issue. Indeed, it was rumoured that McNamara had made the decision to sell M-60s to the Shah in part because of the president's order to "either sell $1.5 billion a year in hard goods to balance our payments or to cut troops in Germany."[75] American troops stationed in Germany were integral to US relations with

Western Europe and were regarded as an important balance to the Warsaw Pact. At the same time, Washington's balance of payments posed a serious problem for the Johnson administration.

However, Komer was concerned that McNamara's decision was unduly hasty and likely to cause political problems with other regional allies, such as Turkey and Pakistan, who might see the Shah purchase M-60s and want similar deals without being able to afford them. In his own inimitable style, Komer warned that the US should not let "Rapid Robert's passion for promptitude panic us into premature pusillanimity."[76] The fact remained, however, that McNamara had privileged the sale of M-60 tanks, either to please the Shah or to ease America's balance of payments, over the previously stated desire to use military assistance to prevent the Shah over-extending Iran's military expenditure. That no ceiling for such sales was agreed, and in Komer's view was unlikely to be reached, further highlighted the relegation of Iran's economic development and non-military modernization in the hierarchy of the Johnson administration's priorities.

Although they remained a thorn in the side of US–Iranian relations, the protests of Iranian students were unable to derail discussions between the Shah and US officials. The Johnson administration, through the investigations of the FBI and the procedures of the INS, sought to quiet the student opposition while placating the Shah's grumblings about American leniency regarding Iranian students. The need to prevent the activities of groups such as the ISA from disrupting the Shah's visit contributed to the Johnson administration's willingness to sell large quantities of military equipment to Iran. By setting friendly relations with the Shah as its main priority, the Johnson administration chose to ignore the voices of thousands of Iranian students in America. By prioritizing a close relationship with Tehran, Iran's military ties with the United States precluded pressuring the Shah towards economic and political modernization. Iran was seen through a Cold War security lens, which viewed her military as the key avenue for maintaining influence with the Shah and keeping him closely aligned with the West.

The Status of Forces Agreement and Ayatollah Khomeini

As the alliance between the United States and Iran tightened throughout the 1960s, the number of Americans living in Iran increased. In October 1964, the Iranian *majlis*, reluctantly, passed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), at last putting to bed Washington's desire for clarification of the legal rights of American military personnel in Iran.[77]

Since the onset of the Cold War, the United States had negotiated similar agreements with host governments around the world to clarify the legal rights of American servicemen. Throughout the 1950s, most had in common a clause that granted the host government the opportunity to waive jurisdictional rights if an American serviceman committed a crime whilst off duty. In other words, if the host government chose to pursue a prosecution, American personnel could be tried under foreign laws.[78] The Immunities Bill, as it was known to Iranians, sparked considerable controversy as critics denounced it for effectively providing diplomatic immunity and privileges to US military personnel and their dependents working in Iran. Indeed, SOFAs had a controversial history, and the one agreed with Tehran proved especially contentious, presenting the Johnson administration with problems that threatened to strain the US–Iranian relationship.

In the mid-1950s, opposition within the United States to SOFAs surfaced when members of the military were brought to trial in foreign courts, which was seen as an unconstitutional forfeiture of their right as Americans to be prosecuted according to American laws. The controversial nature of these SOFAs was highlighted when, on 30 January 1957, a soldier in Japan, Army Specialist William Girard, shot and killed a local woman who was scavenging for spent bullet casings on a military base. In response to the Girard case, the National Security Subcommittee of the Senate House Foreign Affairs Committee passed a resolution demanding the Eisenhower administration rescind all SOFAs unless guarantees were put in place that assured that US military personnel could not be tried under local laws by foreign courts. The Department of State resisted the committee's demands, arguing that they would "lead US allies to believe this country was adopting a 'new colonialism' and endanger national security."

By the 1960s, the controversy surrounding SOFAs had become increasingly complex as some American allies began to object to the agreements whilst other governments sought them. Students in South Korea protested that Seoul's agreement with the United States infringed their country's sovereignty, while in Thailand there was some enthusiasm for the signing of an agreement to formalize the nature of jurisdiction involving US soldiers. Writing in the *Washington Post*, John Maffre observed that the key difference regarding how welcome a SOFA would be depended largely on which government requested it. "If a government in one of these host countries doesn't seek a SOFA on its own initiative, it may come under fire from its own nationalists for being servile to Uncle Sam," Maffre noted, whereas in other countries "SOFAs have

become a kind of status symbol…that sets them on an equal basis in law with the free world's Leviathan." In the case of Iran, the agreement was widely seen by Iranians of all stripes as an imperialistic imposition by Washington that had been willingly colluded in by the Pahlavi regime.

Moreover, the agreement with Iran was, according to James Bill, "unprecedented. It was a particularly severe application of the concept since it nullified any and all Iranian legal control over the growing American military colony stationed in that country."[79] The agreement with Iran went even further than previous SOFAs as the immunities applied to official American personnel were also extended to include all their dependents. Iranians across the country, sensitive to reminders of the despised capitulation laws of the early 20th century and other unwanted foreign interventions, objected vociferously to the new privileges afforded to hundreds of Americans in Iran.[80] A $200 million military credit agreement reached two weeks later between the US and Iran greatly exacerbated the anger felt by many Iranians, who saw it not as a bureaucratic coincidence but as an American payment for the passage of SOFA and evidence of Washington's influence over Iranian politics.[81]

Whilst it has been suggested that "SOFA was only one part of the overall tightening of Iranian–American relations in the 1960s," it was especially significant for a number of reasons.[82] Firstly, this particular SOFA did not immediately produce any great positive change in relations between Iran and the US. The ties between the two countries did not really become any closer because they were already very close, as was illustrated by the Shah's earlier visit to the United States and their continuing military and economic links. Moreover, even after the bill was passed, the negotiation of its precise wording actually caused tension between US and Iranian officials.[83] Yet, despite this lack of real change in the relationship between Washington and Tehran, the SOFA was viewed by Iranians as a symbol of American imperialism that came to illustrate both the high levels of resentment towards the United States and the inability of US policymakers to control or predict events within Iran. Acting alongside one another, these two factors – burgeoning anti-Americanism and diminishing American influence – made it increasingly difficult for the Johnson administration to achieve its goals in Iran.

Secondly, there was some concern among low-level US officials that the SOFA had actually become more trouble than it was worth. In December 1964, Martin Herz, counsellor for political affairs in the American Embassy in Tehran, complained to colleagues in the State Department that "it would be still more fun if we are able to report that we have finally buttoned up this odious business which has given

us nothing but trouble and which raises the question, with the benefit of hind-sight, whether the whole mess was really necessary."[84] Gordon Tiger of the State Department Iran Desk agreed with Herz and noted that even "the original proponents" of SOFA might share their view.[85] By mid-December Herz commented that "a very high price has been paid for something that isn't of commensurate value."[86]

Not least among the reasons for this "high price" was the significant opposition shown to the bill within the Iranian *majlis*, where it was passed by only 74 votes to 61. Considering the tight control normally displayed by the Shah's regime in *majlis* voting records, the fact that 138 members of the Iranian parliament were from the officially sanctioned Novin Party and, crucially, that 50 members failed to vote, the scale of opposition to SOFA was extremely high; Herz and Tiger were right to question if it was worth it. The day after the vote, Stuart Rockwell also suggested that "not only [Prime Minister] Mansur but to some extent also the Shah's regime has paid an unexpectedly high price."[87]

The American Embassy received a list from Iranian insiders that claimed to show the voting record of *majlis* members on the SOFA Bill. According to the list, 33 members were "'overt' abstainers" (rather than simply being otherwise engaged), 17 Novin members voted against, whilst a further seven abstained, and nearly half the Foreign Affairs Committee voted against it.[88] US officials were keen not to give the list too much credibility, but the conclusions inferred from it were that the widespread opposition and anger directed towards SOFA was not just limited to opposition figures or the general public but actually penetrated the government itself.

Thirdly, the passage of SOFA illustrated the differing objectives and priorities of State Department officials and their colleagues in the Department of Defence. The Defence Department was eager to get an agreement resolved in order to confirm the status of American personnel in Iran. The State Department, on the other hand, did not object to achieving this goal so long as relations between Iran and the United States were not unduly harmed by SOFA and that political repercussions within Iran were kept to a minimum. Once again, the diverging priorities and conceptions of US interests held by different bureaucratic departments contributed to an incoherent application of policy.

Finally, the nationwide objection to SOFA brought into sharp relief the changing nature of the anti-regime opposition within Iran. Among the most vocal critics of SOFA was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.[89] Widely anticipated to become the next leading Shia cleric, Khomeini had risen to prominence during the riots of June 1963, whereupon he was arrested

and placed under house arrest.[90] Educated and trained in the religious-scholar city of Qom, Khomeini had initially become politicized during the reign of Reza Shah.[91] Khomeini was particularly opposed to Reza Shah's overtly anti-religious domestic policies, which were designed to undermine the political influence of the clergy that confronted the new Shah.[92] It was during this time that Khomeini first began to contemplate the idea of clerical rule that became central to his eventual consolidation of power following the revolution in 1978–79.[93]

Although Khomeini's views on the role of the clergy, government, and power were to evolve over the following two decades, he involved himself in political issues infrequently. At the time of the *coup d'état* that removed Mossadeq from power, Khomeini offered moral but limited support to the highly politicized and volatile clerical agitator Ayatollah Abol-Ghasem Kashani.[94] In the years after the Shah was restored to the throne, the Shia clergy generally became less political under the conservative leadership of Grand Ayatollah Hossein Borujerdi, who fostered a period of calm and reduced tensions between the government and the *ulama*.[95]

It has been argued that Borujerdi's death in 1961 not only vacated the leading position in Shia Islam but also granted Khomeini the freedom to engage in political activities; a firm believer in clerical hierarchy, Khomeini had for a number of years followed Borujerdi's example by maintaining an outwardly neutral attitude regarding Iranian politics.[96] By the end of 1961, Khomeini was able to express his antipathy towards the Pahlavi regime, which was stoked further by the enfranchisement of women and reform of landownership that was promised in the Shah's White Revolution.[97] But it was in 1963 that the issues between Khomeini and the government came to a head in a series of fast-moving developments that Manochehr Dorraj has called the "death knell" for the Pahlavi regime.[98]

In February 1963, one of the Shah's long-term ambitions came to fruition when Iranian women were granted the right to vote.[99] This was seen by many Shia clergy, including Khomeini, as an unwanted revolutionary societal change and intentional slight to Iran's Islamic tradition. In an effort to control the rising protests of the *ulama*-led religious masses, SAVAK infiltrated crowds in Qom and raided a number of seminaries, killing at least one cleric.[100] This unprecedented and direct assault at the seat of Shia learning in Iran added yet further fuel to the flames of protest that were stirring the religious working class.[101] Incensed, Khomeini condemned the government for its "evil intentions" and, more ominously, opined that if the Shah was indeed behind the raid then it would

be the cause of "funeral prayers for Islam, Iran, and [the] legality" of the Pahlavi regime.[102] In a second speech on 3 June, Khomeini, in reference to the "tyrannical [Pahlavi] regime," likened the Shah to the greatest evil-doer in Shia tradition, Yazid.[103]

The results of Khomeini's passionate speeches were two-fold as they earmarked him as the leading clerical opponent to the Shah but also led to his arrest on 5 June.[104] In order to stifle his protests and calm the rising tensions, the government kept Khomeini under house arrest in Tehran for the next ten months.[105] When he was finally released in April 1964, it followed some intense debate between Prime Minister Ali Mansur, who felt his release made political sense, and the Shah; the latter only relented on the condition that Khomeini would promise to "behave."[106] Whilst the Shah's regime was well placed to control or subdue any direct opposition, Khomeini's nationalist and religious appeal raised the possibility of his cooperation with both the traditional, religious population and the more progressive National Front.[107]

The timing of Khomeini's release, however, could not have been worse as within months "the government handed Khomeini his second issue" in the form of the SOFA dispute, which proved to be another focal point for the anti-regime opposition.[108] Like many Iranians, Khomeini was vehemently opposed to what was seen as the imposition of an agreement that granted Americans jurisdictional rights and undermined Iranian sovereignty.[109] Once more Khomeini took to the pulpit and, in a fiercely critical and widely quoted speech, articulated the issue at the heart of the spreading reaction to SOFA:

> They have reduced the Iranian people to a level lower than that of an American dog. If someone runs over a dog belonging to an American, he will be prosecuted. Even if the Shah himself were to run over a dog belonging to an American, he would be prosecuted. But if an American cook runs over the Shah, the head of state, no one will have the right to interfere with him.[110]

In the same speech, Khomeini outlined what amounted to a religious-nationalist manifesto, stating that "[i]f the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit this nation to be the slaves of Britain one day, and America the next…Israel to take over the Iranian economy… misuse to be made of the public treasury…the Majlis to be formed at bayonet-point…women to teach at boys' schools and men to teach at girls' schools, with all the resulting corruption."[111] Equally significant was the vitriol Khomeini aimed at the United States' role in the SOFA

issue – "Let the American president know that in the eyes of the Iranian people, he is the most repulsive member of the human race today" – that marked a clear turn towards an overt anti-American tendency within the religious-nationalist opposition to the Pahlavi regime.[112]

In another speech, Khomeini went so far as to advocate a military coup to overthrow the Shah, which resulted in the dissident clerical leader's exile to Turkey in November.[113] The incident catapulted Khomeini into the national consciousness, and within just a few years "he was a 'model for imitation' accepted by hundreds of thousands."[114] Furthermore, the decision to exile Khomeini actually caused further problems for the Iranian and American governments as, according to Stuart Rockwell, a "widespread impression undoubtedly exists that [Khomeini's exile] was only because of his criticism of [the] Status Bill and $200 million US loan."[115] This played directly into the hands of those in Iran who felt that SOFA represented a return to the days of capitulation and the loan merely further evidence of America's dominance over Iranian affairs.

Khomeini's rise to prominence during the SOFA dispute was a highly significant development for two reasons. Firstly, it was among the formative events of Khomeini's political career that would eventually lead to his symbolic and practical role in the Iranian Revolution. Some of his intellectual paradigms, such as the historical importance of the *ulama* in resisting foreign interference and the moral necessity of an Islamic cleric-led government, were formed, articulated, and evolved during this period.[116] Secondly, Khomeini's antagonism towards the role of the United States in the SOFA issue was indicative of a growing, if still largely inchoate, anti-Americanism. The implication was that Washington's close ties to the Pahlavi regime was contributing to the nascent coalescing of opposition forces within Iran.[117] Although at this stage the National Front and the religious opposition were only beginning to form links together, Khomeini's dramatic use of religious allegory and nationalist fervour pointed to a wider and more appealing anti-Pahlavi ideology than had previously existed.

A report entitled "The Significance of Khomeini's Opposition to the Iranian Government" prepared by William Miller of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research suggested that the Shah's policies had "reawakened" the opposition within the formerly politically inert religious community.[118] According to Miller, this section of Iranian society associated the Americans closely with the Shah's policies and, equally important, Khomeini's political opposition was "a view shared by a significant mass of Iranians."[119] Miller also argued that the label "black reactionary," given to Khomeini and other religious opponents of the regime by the

Shah, was misleading. Whilst "there is little question…that [Khomeini] is reactionary and provincial in outlook," Miller wrote, "in almost every instance the principle of a particular reform has been accepted; the challenge has come over methodology." Miller cited Khomeini's opposition to the emancipation of women on the grounds that "emancipation without education is meaningless," and his acceptance of land reform provided "just compensation is made."[120] For Miller, the flexible nature and adaptability of Iranian Shia Islam was the most significant factor, although it was largely ignored by other policymakers.

In concluding his report, Miller chose not to dwell on "might have beens" and instead asserted that

> [w]hat is now clear is that Khomeini's exile has aroused dormant nationalist feelings. The Shah and the United States have been branded as both anti-nationalist and anti-religious. This new attitude has tarnished our formerly favourable image, poses a threat to our interests in Iran, and will certainly make our task there far more difficult.[121]

Although a low-level embassy official, Miller had a high level of experience and expertise regarding Iran. In light of this, he felt it was essential that Washington adopt a more nuanced attitude towards the religious opposition. He did not accept at face value the Shah's depiction of Khomeini and his adherents as "black reactionaries" and recognized their significance within Iranian society. Moreover, Miller realized that by associating itself so closely with the Shah, the United States was increasingly seen as both anti-nationalist and anti-religious, and therefore increasingly likely to become the focal point alongside the Shah for the discontent emanating from both these opposition camps.

The increasingly widespread opposition to the Shah's domestic policies dramatically manifested itself on 21 January 1965 when a young Iranian, Mohamad Bokharai, shot Prime Minister Mansur outside the Iranian parliament. Initial reports by US officials suggested that as he was carrying a Koran and picture of Khomeini, the would-be assassin was a supporter of the recently exiled ayatollah and that his actions were a direct response to Khomeini's treatment. There was some debate within the State Department regarding the extent of the discontent; Katherine Bracken of the Iran Desk complained that director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research Thomas Hughes' use of the phrase "widespread discontent" gave unwarranted credibility to the assumption that discontent was fomented purely in response to the Iranian government's policies. Equally significant was the implicit acceptance

among State Department officials of the Shah's assertion that the religious opposition, from which Mansur's assassin originated, were "black reactionaries." By reaching such a simplified conclusion, US policymakers completely ignored the caveats and nuances that William Miller had attempted to introduce into American understanding of Iran's religious population.

Conclusion

Throughout the Johnson administration, the actions of non-state actors seriously affected US–Iranian relations. Each time the Shah visited the United States later in the decade, a familiar set of events unfolded as student groups, including the ISA and the recently organized transnational Confederation of Iranian Students National Union (CISNU), protested against the military and political relationship between Washington and Iran. Responding to the tension caused by groups like the ISA, American policymakers chose to prioritize maintaining its close relations with the Shah. Economic and political development were deemed secondary to ensuring the Shah was satisfied with his relationship with Washington. Johnson therefore sought to placate the Shah by acceding to his demands for military credit.

Moreover, by focusing on the military sales aspect of US–Iranian relations, the Johnson administration dismissed the legitimate demands of the Iranian student opposition movement. It was not really until after the revolution, when it was manifestly too late, that Americans began to consider whether they should have paid more attention to the concerns of Iranian students and other opposition groups.[122] Ironically, although the ISA's protests initially strained Johnson's relationship with the Shah, in the end they inadvertently contributed to the strengthening of US–Iranian ties.

The repercussions of the SOFA episode also had a long-term impact on both internal Iranian politics and US–Iranian relations. Although it is difficult to state whether or not the $200 million military credit that Washington extended to Tehran so soon after the SOFA bill passed through the *majlis* was a diplomatic *quid pro quo*, it was certainly seen in this light by most Iranians. However, where many Iranians considered the SOFA affair to be yet further evidence of Washington's control over Tehran, the military credit deal actually signified the opposite. American influence over the Shah was in steep decline, and US officials saw arms sales as the key component in maintaining the warm US–Iranian relationship. The SOFA had not only raised the serious possibility of an

opposition Iranian alliance between the National Front and religious anti-Pahlavi groups, but it had helped to shift the balance of power from Washington to Tehran.[123]

The lessons that William Miller tried to apply were not heeded in Washington. Instead, one sees US policymakers increasingly reject nuanced appraisals of Iranian politics in favour of tightening the relationship with Tehran, which would have serious long-term repercussions. Indeed, despite the strength of the US–Iranian relationship, its inherent fragility was exposed in 1964 and 1965 when the ongoing case of a US-based Iranian conman's allegations of fraud against the Shah's family became an ongoing irritant that threatened to cause it to crack.[124] In their attempt to smooth over these potential fractures, US officials tightened the Johnson administration's relationship with the Shah through the extension of military credit. Because it relied on the Shah to maintain stability in Iran and thus the Persian Gulf, the United States was compelled to sideline questions of modernization and instead was forced to placate the Shah on issues close to his heart. This pattern of Washington's declining influence over Tehran and the diminishing role for modernization theory continued into the late 1960s. As we shall see in the next chapter, the problems caused by Johnson's war in Vietnam and the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War further deepened the president's reliance on the Shah.

5
"Papa Knows Best": Resisting American Influence

Arguably no other conflict in the nation's history, apart from the Civil War, has had as profound an impact in reshaping American society, economy, politics, culture, and memory as the war in Vietnam. Even so, while Vietnam occupied the majority of the Johnson administration's attention, it did not, as some have argued, simply lead "to the neglect of relations with many [Third World allies], particularly with Iran." That the Shah was one of the few Third World leaders to support LBJ's Vietnam policy meant a great deal to the president. For his part, the Shah believed that Iranian support for the US in Vietnam warranted a favourable response to his demands for further American credit to improve his military. Forced to contend with the Shah's increasingly strident demands, US officials worked hard to placate the Iranian monarch and maintain some semblance of influence over his policies using their limited resources. However, America's escalating involvement in Vietnam lent weight to those in Congress who favoured limiting the extent of foreign military sales credit given to developing countries. The Johnson administration therefore had to reconcile Congressional reticence with the need to compensate the Shah for his support.

The relationship between Washington and Tehran was further strained when a war between India and Pakistan erupted in 1965. In an attempt to bring the conflict to a close and Pakistan to heel, the United States cut off its military supply line to Lahore. The Shah saw Washington's actions as a betrayal of an American ally and member of CENTO, which made the withdrawal of military supplies in time of war unconscionable in his eyes. The period following the Indo-Pakistan War saw the Shah become increasingly disillusioned with his alliance with the United States. Not only did Pakistan's experience reinforce his belief that Iran needed a strong military, it amplified his demands for increasing his military credit in the US and led to him purchasing arms from the Soviet

Union for the first time. Furthermore, the crisis played a central role in tipping the balance of influence in Tehran's favour, not least because the CIA was forced to abandon many of its facilities in Pakistan and turn to Iran for alternatives. Tehran exploited Washington's increasing dependence on Iran for regional stability to extract concessions from the Johnson administration.

As US influence over the Shah declined, so too did the role of modernization theory in Washington's relations with Iran. Given Iran's strategic importance, Washington placed a greater significance on maintaining a close relationship with Tehran through the extension of military credits than on pushing him towards policies of reform and development. That is not to say that US officials no longer considered modernization to be an important issue, or that Iran did not require further economic development. Rather, the overriding concern for policymakers was how best to strengthen ties with the Shah; modernization was, once again, overtaken by considerations of national security.

The Vietnam and Indo-Pakistan Wars both created a political environment that contributed to Tehran's ability to exploit American weaknesses and force Washington into supporting the Shah's military expansion programme. It is certainly fair to state that during the Johnson administration "relations tightened considerably," and the years 1965–67 were critical in this development.[1] However, the evolution of US–Iranian relations went further than that during this time. As James Goode has suggested, the "balance [of dependence] began to shift in favour of the Iranian monarch."[2] Similarly, Andrew Johns has written that the Shah, "tired of being treated like a schoolboy," had finally "graduated to full partnership status."[3] In fact, the reality was that Iran was now increasingly better able to call the shots than the United States was; Tehran, not Washington, took the lead on shaping the nature of US–Iranian relations.

Framed against the backdrop of the Vietnam and Indo-Pakistan wars, this chapter begins by examining the Shah's assertive foreign policy and American efforts to acquire a number of vital intelligence facilities inside Iran. The convergence of these two factors demonstrated the shifting balance as Washington's focus on national security issues and Tehran's independent foreign policy created a situation in which the former increasingly relied upon the latter. It also signalled that while economic development was still considered important by US officials, issues of national security trumped those of modernization. The chapter goes on to discuss the ongoing debates and negotiations surrounding the Shah's demands for military credit. Although some officials objected

to the extension of a new credit deal to Tehran and favoured a greater focus on issues of modernization, their dissenting voices were effectively sidelined by the prevailing imperative of securing close ties with the Shah. Continuing the pattern set during the Kennedy administration, the United States found itself endorsing the Shah's vision of modernity for Iran. This reflected the recognition by most policymakers that the US could no longer dictate the terms of the relationship to the Shah and represented a clear step towards Iranian independence from Washington. Rather than neglecting US relations with Iran because of the conflict in Vietnam, policymakers found themselves spending much of their attention on Tehran precisely because of the issues created by Vietnam.

The Limits of "Massage"

During the spring of 1965, voices within Washington expressed concern regarding US–Iranian relations. Noting that the Shah's visit to the US in June the previous year had marked "a high point of cordiality," US officials feared that things had since "fallen off somewhat."[4] NSC staffer Harold Saunders argued that it was important to not "let ourselves be fooled by [Iran's] shiny exterior…[although] things are going ostensibly well." Observing that relations between the US and Iran were prone to frustrations on both sides, Saunders commented that they were "essentially… in the honeymoon period of a clearly rocky marriage."[5] Moreover, as Robert Komer astutely observed, US–Iranian relations were now a "test case" of whether American influence would commensurately decrease as the financial independence of developing countries increased.[6]

In order to avert the possibility of tensions, Johnson recognized the necessity of continuing the Kennedy administration's policy of massaging the Shah's ego; Komer noted that the Iranian leader "is a staunch friend, but he loves his pat on the back (and the Big Boss has always been happy to give it to him)."[7] LBJ was on friendlier terms with the Shah than JFK had been, stemming largely from his visit to Iran in 1962 as vice president. Equally important for Johnson throughout his time in office was the Shah's support for his interventions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, neither of which were well received in much of the rest of the world.[8] US–Iranian relations, therefore, whilst not quite at the high point they had been in mid-1964, were on a reasonably even keel in spring 1965 as some of the irritants of the previous year and a half began to dissipate.

Alongside these developments, the Shah visited Moscow to promote his broader policy of rapprochement with the Soviet Union. The visit

was apparently "marked by [the] unusual warmth of reception," as Soviet officials reciprocated the Shah's goodwill. Although the Shah reiterated his firm pro-Western stance by staunchly defending US policy in Vietnam "even better than Johnson" according to Foreign Minister Aram, the discussions focused on the possibility of a Soviet-financed steel mill in Iran.[9] Being able to produce steel was an important component of the Shah's concept of Iranian modernity; the trip to Moscow made clear that he was not beyond pursuing modernization by expanding economic ties with the Soviet Union. The Johnson administration did not object to a thawing of relations between Tehran and Moscow – a process that had begun in 1962 – but the State Department was keen to limit Soviet influence in Iran. To counter Moscow's offer to finance a steel mill, Rusk asked Ambassador Meyer to persuade the Shah to partner with US firms in building the steel mill, citing the Soviet Union's inferior engineering techniques.[10] More importantly, US officials feared that an influx of Soviet technicians would pose a security threat to Tehran.

By the summer of 1965, US policymakers were concerned about the negative impact the burgeoning Soviet–Iranian rapprochement was having on US–Iranian relations. In August, the embassy in Tehran reported that "while basically sound, there are now more difficulties in US–Iranian relations," in part because of a "suspicion" among Iranian officials that the US was likely to react negatively to the Soviet steel mill deal.[11] However, the Johnson administration was determined to maintain close ties with Iran for reasons of national security, not least due to the significance of American intelligence facilities based inside the country. The Iranian facilities became increasingly important to Washington since the United States was forced to withdraw similar operations from Pakistan as US relations with Ayub Khan's government deteriorated in the mid-1960s.[12] The value of the Iran-based facilities was underlined when Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, and the new director of Central Intelligence, William Raborn, received Johnson's approval to "proceed as a matter of urgency to develop alternative facilities for our intelligence installations and activities now in Pakistan."[13]

Ambassador Meyer's initial investigation into the possibility of expanding American facilities highlighted the need to deal with the issue delicately: "there [is] no question [that] proposed additional facilities can be political dynamite, particularly after our pyrrhic victory last fall in obtaining legislative approval for immunities for Americans here. Question is how much official American presence can Iran tolerate."[14] While CIA officials urged the expansion of US intelligence facilities in Iran, the Departments of Defence and State backed the embassy's analysis that

the political risks were too high and would damage America's position in Iran.

In addition to the delicate issue of intelligence facilities, the Johnson administration also sought the Shah's support over Vietnam. US officials recognized the need to maintain Iran's support for American policy seeing as it was one of the few Third World countries to back Washington in the Indochina conflict. Prime Minister Hoveyda expressed Tehran's belief that the United States should be grateful for Iranian support. As he pointed out to the president, Iran supported America's "defence of the constitutional rights of the Vietnamese people" but hoped that it had "fulfilled its share, however insignificant, by providing Viet-Nam, last April, with one thousand tons of motor fuel."[15] Although it was important for the United States to foster widespread support for its Vietnam policy in the Third World, for the Shah it was essential not "to get too far out of [the] Afro-Asian mainstream" or be seen to be toeing the US line.[16] The Shah thus exploited his support for US policy in Vietnam and the expansion of CIA listening posts within his country to cultivate mounting leverage over his American ally.

Indeed, this resulted in an Iranian foreign policy increasingly independent of direction from Washington, which was most clearly seen in Tehran's dealings with Moscow, particularly the joint venture to build a steel mill near Isfahan. After a long meeting with the Shah, in which the Iranian monarch detailed a list of grievances against the US, Meyer noted that he "had prepared himself to pave way for possible shift in [Iran's] future policy."[17] Contrasting the difficulty Iran had had in acquiring US backing for a steel mill with the "generous" aid offered to "American critics like Nasser and India," the Shah informed Meyer that the Soviets had also offered him a 200-year non-aggression pact.[18] Even while the Shah noted his firm support for the United States in Vietnam, his point was clear: Iran's modernization would not be left to the mercy of Washington's benevolence, so if Tehran could not get what it needed – and deserved – from the United States, it would seek alternative sources.

As Meyer reported, the "Shah's central theme was that Iran must stand on its own feet, militarily and economically."[19] The question of Iranian development was integral to the Shah's conception of the Pahlavi dynasty's place in history and his personal legacy. Iran's modernization, therefore, was closely tied to the Shah's foreign policy and diverged from American ideas about modernization, which suggested a steel mill was an unnecessary expense. Instead, Iranian development owed more to domestic and historical considerations than American pressure to modernize. At times, therefore, the Shah's vision of Iranian modernity not

only clashed with those emanating from Washington but led him to pursue closer ties with the Soviet Union.

In addition to the issue of Iranian development raised by the steel mill, the questions surrounding intelligence facilities not only illustrated the evolving nature of US dependence on Iran but also once again revealed the conflicting opinions that existed within the Johnson administration. Following Dean Rusk's request to investigate further the practicality of increasing the American intelligence presence in Iran, Meyer told his State Department colleagues that the facilities in Iran were already of the same calibre as those in Pakistan. "Even without political considerations," therefore, Meyer could see little point in expanding the intelligence program.[20] The political side of the equation, according to Meyer, also weighed against the wishes of Rusk, McNamara, and Raborn.

Reiterating his previous observations about the Shah's efforts to manufacture a new, less American-dependent image, Meyer argued that "nationalistic sentiment…is on upswing in Iran." Moreover, "sensitive US operations here as well as burgeoning US official presence are tailor-made targets for anti-Shah and/or anti-American elements," which the Shah would be forced to accommodate. Meyer concluded by explicitly rejecting the wisdom of expanding the number of intelligence posts: "Since we already have well-established facilities…I think that it would be most unwise to tempt fate by importing additional hundreds of Americans. Camel's back here is already heavy laden, from standpoint of what is politically tolerable here. Why risk destroying extensive facilities already in being for minimal additional product?"[21]

The very next day, Dean Rusk sent a telegram to Meyer ordering him to again reassess the situation. Rusk categorically rejected Meyer's assertion that Iran's and Pakistan's intelligence installations were of comparable quality and usefulness. Rusk cited "critical US national security interests" and the high probability of an enforced withdrawal of facilities from Pakistan at short notice.[22] In his response, Meyer accepted the "gravity of the problem" but still advocated at most a limited increase in intelligence facilities in Iran. The ambassador made clear his objections when he sarcastically questioned the expert assessments of the "top US intelligence authorities."[23] Instead, he advised a "total policy" to ameliorate the wide range of irritants – harsh terms of military and economic assistance; Iranian students in the US; American unresponsiveness regarding Iran's steel mill aspirations – that were causing friction between the US and the Shah.[24]

Meyer was forcefully arguing that the US needed to make a serious effort to resolve these tensions if there was to be any hope of laying the

groundwork necessary for persuading the Shah to allow an expansion of intelligence facilities. Clearly, the key concerns of US officials during these policy debates were based upon their considerations of America's national security interests in Iran. It was considered vital for US interests – although not by Meyer – to obtain an increase in the CIA presence in Iran. The focus of these debates, centred as they were upon national security concerns, precluded any real consideration of modernization in Iran. Even Meyer, who opposed the increase in intelligence facilities, based his objections on the grounds that to do so would potentially foment anti-American sentiment within Iranian nationalist circles.

Moreover, such a development might force the Shah into distancing himself from the United States, which in itself was a real possibility given his well-known frustration with American policy. If this were to happen, it would be perilous for the United States as its strategy for the region depended on maintaining a close relationship with the Pahlavi regime. So, by sidelining issues of modernization, the choice for the Johnson administration was between pushing for more intelligence posts – which may cause political problems – and placating the Shah. That Dean Rusk was unconvinced by Meyer's objections illustrated the premium that had been placed upon the intelligence facility issue. Even if the Shah approved further American facilities, he would undoubtedly do so on a *quid pro quo* basis, which would strengthen his argument that Iran needed to improve its military in order to avoid becoming another Vietnam. By opting to pursue what essentially amounted to an increase in the CIA presence in Iran, Dean Rusk was demonstrating that, as the US–Iranian relationship evolved, Washington was increasingly reliant upon Tehran.

As Meyer had reported in the beginning of September 1965, the Shah's concern about US–Iranian relations was exacerbated by his apprehension about America's lack of success in Vietnam. He was increasingly preoccupied with the "spectre of Iran becoming another Vietnam," which led him to pursue a path that allowed for friendly relations with Moscow alongside close ties with Washington.[25] Meyer later noted that "the Shah considered Vietnam a prototype"; if US intervention resulted in a "quagmire," then surely "it would be far better, the Shah argued, for Iran to be fully equipped to take care of itself in regional controversies."[26] By the autumn of 1965, the Shah was well aware of how important Iran's cooperation and support over Vietnam was to the United States. He confidently asserted that "he was probably the only leader, particularly in the Afro-Asian world" to support Johnson in Vietnam.[27] His deepest concern, however, was that despite his loyalty, the Johnson

administration did not show its appreciation in any tangible way, while less friendly countries received better treatment. US–Iranian relations were clearly in the middle of an ongoing evolution; as American reliance on Iranian intelligence facilities increased, Tehran tested the waters of Soviet friendship and the Shah used his support in Vietnam to extract concessions from Washington.

Once again, the Johnson administration resorted to "massage" in its attempts to prevent the Shah from drifting away from the safety of the American harbour and into Soviet waters. As Komer noted, "whenever [the Shah] worries about his destiny he begins to see rust on his westward anchor."[28] Lyndon Johnson offered a message of encouragement for the World Conference on Illiteracy in Tehran, the Shah's "pet project," following Komer's pithy observation that he was "currently in one of his periodic moods [where he believes] that the US doesn't love him enough."[29] On the occasion of the Shah's Silver Jubilee, Johnson sent his personal congratulations. According to Meyer, the Shah was "extremely pleased and gratified by the president's message."[30] In a further attempt to resolve the massage problem, Johnson sent the Shah a letter, very reminiscent of the one Kennedy sent in May 1963, praising him for "the statesmanlike roles played by Your Majesty, Prime Minister Hoveyda, and Ambassador Ansary" in supporting UN efforts towards peace between India and Pakistan.[31]

However, the US response to the Indo-Pakistan War had become a major concern for the Shah, one that could not easily be washed away with kind words and compliments. Just as his concerns about Vietnam had stemmed from hypothesizing himself and Iran in Diem and South Vietnam's position, the Shah was deeply worried about what would happen if Iran were caught up in an analogous situation to the Indo-Pakistan War. If Tehran were to become embroiled in a war with its Arab neighbours, would the United States turn the taps off to Iran's military supply line, just as it had done to Pakistan? For the Shah, the issue of Washington's credibility and willingness to stand by its allies raised serious questions about the nature and value of Iran's alliance with America.

US officials were worried that the conflict between India and Pakistan had fuelled a "volcanic" reaction by members of Congress who objected to US-supplied arms being used in a conflict with a country that was not aligned with Moscow or Beijing. If Iran did provide arms to Pakistan, as the Shah had threatened to do, Meyer warned that the response on Capitol Hill would be apoplectic and would put at risk supplies of US military equipment to Iran.[32] Even so, Iran secretly supplied arms to Pakistan, against the wishes of the Johnson administration.[33] The fact

that the Shah was willing to go this far in risking America's wrath suggests two things. First, he was once again keen to assert Iran's independence and felt confident enough to do so. Second, the Shah was deeply concerned about Pakistan's treatment by the US, seeing the possibility of how Iran might be treated in a future war with the radical Arab states.

By October 1965, the Shah's feelings towards the US had become increasingly complex; although he stood with the West on principle, disillusion with Washington was creeping in, encouraging him to throw off the shackles of dependence he felt he had been wearing since the coup in 1953 restored him to the Peacock Throne. On 24 September 1965, Meyer warned that tensions with Iran were on the rise. In addition to the regular complaint of "discrimination," the Shah declared the strings that were attached to Iran's arms purchases as the "crowning irritation." The fact that Tehran was forbidden from sending arms to Pakistan during its war with India without permission from Washington rankled the Shah enormously. During one particularly bitter meeting with Meyer, the Shah turned to Prime Minister Hoveyda and angrily remarked, "We are not free."[34] With one comment, the Shah demonstrated just how frustrated he had become with his relationship with the United States.

The Shah's Military Programme and US Credit

As 1965 came to a close, the Shah's dissatisfaction with Washington showed no signs of abating even as he turned his attention to questions of Iran's modernization and economic development. By mid-November, the steel mill agreement with the Soviet Union had been reached and the Shah was reaping the popular benefits; the domestic press praised him for effectively "breaking [the foreign] chains," which had until now prevented the growth of an Iranian steel industry. As Armin Meyer observed, "in some Iranian minds [the] steel mill project is being dramatised as an Iranian declaration of independence."[35] In many ways it was. Not only would it allow Iran to diversify its economy and produce its own steel, vital for a variety of modernization projects, it illustrated that Iran was not merely a client state reliant on American handouts. Indeed, the Shah was demonstrating to the world that a line could be walked between the opposing camps of the Cold War; even while he remained firmly in the capitalist camp, there was no reason Tehran could not enjoy reasonable relations with communist countries.

For the Iranian government, the steel mill agreement presented an opportunity to assert Iran's foreign policy independence in its relations

with the United States. During a meeting with representatives from International General Electric and the Project Development Company, Prime Minister Hoveyda explained Tehran's position.[36] Adopting an exaggerated sense of bewilderment, Hoveyda chastised Washington for letting the chance of participating on the steel mill slip through their fingers into the Soviets' waiting grasp: "It was yours. We wanted it to be yours. You had it in your lap. You just let it fly away. It is almost as if you wanted to throw this business to the Russians." In a long and lively lecture, Hoveyda suggested that Washington had "demonstrated a talent in recent years for backing the wrong man, playing the wrong card," citing America's commitments to Vietnam, Turkey, Algeria, Indonesia, and Egypt. According to the prime minister, Iran was different – poorly treated by its American ally yet a better model for progress than those other countries: "Iran has had her revolution, too. But you seem unaware of it. Is it because we made the mistake of not chopping off heads?"[37] The Shah was even blunter when he excoriated Washington for treating Iran the way one would a "colony." As one American official observed, the US from now on would be "dealing with an increasingly independent minded Shah in [the] coming months."[38]

Despite his misgivings about American reliability following the Indo-Pakistan War, the Shah continued to pursue revisions to the military procurement deals he had made with Washington.[39] Back in June 1965, he had sought an increase to the 1964 agreement from $200 million to $230 million credit, as well as an increase in Iranian troop levels from 160,000 to 172,000.[40] Initially, Rusk recommended accepting one of the Shah's other, more minor requests – say, to increase Iran's supplies to a 60-day ammunition reserve – to keep the Shah happy whilst rejecting the credit and troop demands. The trick, according to Rusk, was to give the Shah just enough to keep him happy, but not hold so much back that he would become frustrated.[41] However, following Meyer's advice, in July the State Department acquiesced to the Shah's desire for an increase in troop levels as well.[42] Yet, by November the Shah made clear his intentions by informing Meyer unequivocally that an "additional $200,000,000 worth of urgent military equipment will be obtained." With more than a hint of a warning, he added that he "hoped [the] bulk of it would be available from [the] US" but was willing to shop around if necessary.[43]

This new demand caught American officials almost completely off guard. Less than two years earlier, in mid-1964, a memorandum of understanding had been reached between Iran and the US providing Tehran with $200 million credit for the next four years, through to

1969. That the Shah would make a similar demand so soon into the 1964 agreement illustrated the considerable emphasis he placed on Iran's military requirements. Furthermore, it highlighted the economic and political capital he felt he had at his disposal when dealing with the United States.

The Shah's frustrations with the US were compounded by his belief that the US government was "making [him] squirm" because of the Soviet steel mill agreement.[44] In an attempt at "keeping [the] Iranians happy," Komer suggested resolving the delay in current arms sales to Iran by cutting the interest rate from 5 per cent to 4 per cent. Whilst this was not as low as the 3.5–4 per cent advocated by the Departments of State and Defence, it represented a concession designed to persuade the Shah to maintain his military sales links with the US. In reaching this decision, Komer and McGeorge Bundy also had half an eye on the US government's balance of payments.[45]

However, in a particularly frank Thanksgiving Day discussion with Armin Meyer, the Shah gave voice to his "uneasy feeling [of a] growing estrangement" between their two countries. Describing the long-awaited steel mill as a "dream of all Iranians, [a] dramatic symbol of Iran's movement into [the] modern world," the Shah criticized the US for not providing Iran with better terms on both this issue and on arms sales. Just as his views of Vietnam and the Indo-Pakistan War had become tools for extracting concessions from the United States, so too had the issue of Iranian modernization. Rather than bringing the two countries closer together, the Shah highlighted Iran's progress as a means of demonstrating his country's growing independence. He again made clear his desire to purchase $200 million of additional military hardware, arguing that the US had a "serious…misunderstanding" about Iran's military needs. Moreover, the Shah continued, "since British influence one way or other will be withdrawn [from the Middle East by 1970 at latest], Iran remains [the] single constructive free world power capable of protecting commerce and peace in Gulf area from predatory elements including communists."

At this stage, however, the Johnson administration was keen to prevent what it saw as an unnecessarily large military build-up by Iran. Although US officials accepted that a new $200 million sales agreement with Iran would benefit America's balance of payments, some anxiety remained. Meyer informed the Shah that it was Iran's economic interests that were at the forefront of Washington's concerns. Unconvinced by this argument, the Shah refuted Meyer's suggestion that the steel mill deal had played into Soviet hands and in turn claimed that in fact it

was Washington that was "aiding [the] Soviet objective" by delaying the second allocation of the 1964 arms agreement.[46] More importantly, the Shah saw the American refusal to increase military credit to Tehran as a significant constraint on Iranian independence and further evidence of US efforts to control him and Iran.

Following this meeting, Meyer sent a personal plea to Dean Rusk urging Washington to expedite the improved interest rate for the second portion of the military sale because the "Shah remains [a] true friend of everything in which we believe."[47] Only three days later, Meyer sent another, much longer message to the State Department in which he laid out the case for a greater appreciation of the Shah's worries. Highlighting the central role played by the Shah's vacillating personality, the ambassador argued that the US needed to accept Tehran's military demands because Washington's influence over Iran was in decline as the Shah became more independent-minded and Iran more economically prosperous. Therefore, it was vital that the US consider the Shah's $200 million credit request favourably in order to maintain military, economic, and political influence as well as to assist America's own balance of payments.[48] Whilst Meyer tried to make clear he was not suggesting that the US "cater to [the] Shah's every whim," it was apparent that the ambassador was a useful ally for the Shah who regularly fought in his corner when debating with his Washington colleagues. According to Meyer, the Iranian monarch was determined to spend $200 million on new military acquisitions, so it made economic and political sense that he do so in the United States.[49]

Meyer's efforts to reduce the interest rate were rewarded when the Shah informed him of his pleasure that this issue was "finally settled" and reaffirmed Iran's desire to "buy American."[50] An important factor in smoothing the issue of the interest rate for the second tranche lay in the simultaneous request by the Johnson administration for a greater contribution from Iran to the war effort in Vietnam. Around the time of the Thanksgiving meeting, Meyer raised the possibility of Iran sending a medical team in a support role to Vietnam.[51] The Shah agreed to do this in what Meyer called "an excellent demonstration of Iranian support for US policy in Vietnam."

Whilst Iran was only sending one surgeon, an assistant surgeon, and 20 nurses, it was a symbolic gesture gratefully welcomed by the Johnson administration as it sought to demonstrate Third World support for its intervention in Vietnam.[52] Yet, while the Shah provided moral and actual support to the US in Vietnam, he also allowed, as Barry Rubin has shown, a considerable degree of criticism to exist in Iran's domestic

press.[53] The Shah genuinely believed in the correctness of America's intervention in Vietnam to bolster a friendly regime against communist subversion, but he was also happy to use the Johnson administration's Achilles' heel to his advantage. By making a token gesture in sending a medical team, similar to one sent to Pakistan in the previous year, the Shah gained political leverage in Washington at the time when he was beginning to negotiate a new $200 million credit agreement.

The Johnson administration responded to the Shah's latest credit request by sending a military survey team to Iran to assess precisely what the country's legitimate defence concerns were, while emphasizing the importance of ensuring military expenditure did not hinder economic development.[54] Indeed, the Defence Department was one of the prominent obstacles the Shah faced in acquiring the credit and equipment he so desired. A Special Defence Intelligence Agency report in February 1966 had concluded that although there was some reality to an Arab threat, it was neither a large nor likely one for the foreseeable future. The real threat to the Shah's regime, according to the report, was much more likely to come from Iran's increasingly literate and growing population.[55] The department's caution about giving into the Shah's demands was illustrated by Secretary Robert McNamara when he rejected the possibility of selling a Destroyer-type ship to Iran in addition to 150 Sheridan tanks and two squadrons of F-5Cs. McNamara also made clear his wariness by approving "reluctantly and for planning purposes only" the sale of two squadrons of F-4s.[56]

These objections and delays were met with frustration in Tehran. The American embassy reported in March that the Shah's "tone is getting shriller" due to what he perceived to be Washington's "'papa knows best' attitude." To compound matters, the seemingly considerate treatment accorded to Nasser's Egypt – the Shah's great rival – exacerbated the sense of Iranian disillusion.[57] It seemed every message Meyer sent back to Washington warned that the Shah "was in a dark mood."[58] The ambassador, who was one of the Pahlavi regime's most consistent allies, urged Washington to expedite a solution to the impasse, accepting the Shah's rhetoric that "it is precisely because he does not want [the] Viet-Nam story repeated here that he is pursuing policy of making Iran self-reliant as far as regional security [is] concerned."[59] The Shah's reference to Vietnam highlighted his deep concern about the threat of Arab aggression and foreshadowed the language of the Nixon Doctrine that would drive Richard Nixon's policy towards Tehran.

Despite concerns about the Shah's disillusion with the US, the NSC staff remained determined to emphasize economic development where

possible. Harold Saunders redrafted a State Department "non-letter" to the Shah, stating they could not "pass up a beautiful chance to push the old line" on the need to ensure military spending did not affect Iran's economic development.[60] For once, Saunders found an ally in Meyer whose view on pushing the Shah towards economic development was on this occasion closer to that of the NSC than the State Department.[61] The final draft of the letter, agreed to by the NSC and State Department, attempted to find the "balance [as recommended by Meyer] between showing deference to the Shah's being master in his own house and keeping alive our point about balancing military and economic expenditures."[62]

The Shah was pleased with Johnson's expression of interest in Iranian matters, not least by the fact that the two leaders exchanged four letters in less than five weeks during the spring of 1966, illustrating their close relationship and partially validating the massage policy.[63] However, in his reply to Johnson's letter, the Shah revealed the logic behind his desire to purchase further equipment for Iran's growing military. Where previously the Shah had cited his determination to avoid the crises encountered by Vietnam and Pakistan, which in turn would be beneficial to the US, this time he offered a new argument for Iran's military build-up. Using optimistic estimates of Iran's future oil income – $1,500 million by 1970 – the Shah concisely explained the rationale behind his foreign policy:

> We are strongly determined to stand on our own feet and to undertake the responsibilities of an independent and peace-loving nation with vital interests in the security and stability of this area – a policy which should be welcome to our friends. Thus in the present uncertain conditions and in the face of real dangers in this part of the world we cannot ignore the defence needs of the country. We should be well prepared to cope with any eventuality. If we are strong enough to face these dangers, *they may even fail to materialize*.[64]

How could one possibly argue with the logic of the Shah's self-fulfilling prophecy? In his eyes, the Middle East was self-evidently a potentially dangerous place, so Iran naturally needed to maintain its own national security and thereby contribute to regional stability. Therefore, it was vital that Iran obtain an effective military to defend itself against all possible threats. Note the important distinction being made here: Iran needed to defend itself against *possible* threats, not *probable* ones. If the Shah was only concerned by probable threats then the assessments of

American military advisors – who focused their attention on the probable as opposed to the possible – might have held more sway.

Moreover, so the theory continues, if Iran was strong enough, and spent enough, these possible threats "*may even fail to materialize.*" So according to the Shah's framework, if a significant threat did occur, he was right to spend so much on his military to maintain Iran's security. And if a significant threat did not occur, its absence would be accounted for precisely *because* the Shah spent so much on his military. If it was not already apparent to US officials that the Shah was committed to another series of military purchases, it certainly was now.

The Shah's message was yet another clear signal that Iran's military expenditure would continue to be his main focus and priority. In late March, NIE 34-66 addressed this issue, stating that whilst "Iran's new international stance will provide opportunities for the USSR…Iran's security depends heavily on US support. Thus he is unlikely to move deliberately to alter the alliance or reduce US activities in Iran." The analysis concluded that "Iran's rate of economic growth may be adversely affected by the Shah's ambitious military expansion program."[65] Even so, a CIA memo a week later observed that the Shah's ever-increasing confidence – illustrated by the Soviet steel mill agreement and his White Revolution – and insistence that Iran's "only immediate threat" was from Nasserist Arab states made him "no longer willing to listen to US arguments that Iran cannot afford" expensive military equipment.[66]

As the Shah indicated, he was determined to acquire the military he deemed necessary for Iran's defence against all *possible* threats, even if the expense spiralled ever higher and the threats failed to materialize, which would only be proof of the validity of his course. The CIA's report acknowledged that the Shah had recently "intimated that as a last resort he might turn to the USSR [for arms, which]…would represent a turning point in his relations with the West and could, if carried out on a large scale, accomplish a major current Soviet objective, the withdrawal of the US military mission in Iran."[67] If the Shah's policies were in part driven by fears of Nasserist expansion, the Johnson administration's policies were driven by fears of Soviet encroachment. Washington's attempts to encourage economic development were motivated by the assumption that modernization would produce political stability, thereby precluding the likelihood of communist-inspired subversion. However, the possibility that the Shah might turn to the Soviet Union for arms placed an even greater emphasis on remaining the Shah's principal arms provider. Retaining its position as Iran's leading supplier of arms was assumed to be key to the United States maintaining as much influence as possible

over the Shah's policies. The result of this was three-fold: the administration's lingering modernization impulses were subjugated to the arms sales issue; the US was increasingly in a comparatively subservient position, working hard to meet the Shah's requirements in order to prevent a Soviet arms deal; and the Shah was able to exploit American fears about Soviet encroachment.

"Papa Knows Best"

In May 1966, the military survey team that had been sent by Johnson to investigate Iran's military requirements finally delivered its findings to Washington and Tehran. The Peterson Report turned out to be something of a thorny problem for the Johnson administration. Going against the views of the State Department, it recommended furnishing Iran with an additional $308 million "augmentation" of military equipment. Although the Department of State was generally the most willing to accommodate the Shah's requests for arms sales, the Peterson Report contradicted its preference for limiting the Shah's new spending to the $200 million that had been approved by the Iranian *majlis* towards the end of 1965. With this in mind, State Department officials made it clear that the findings of the Peterson Report did not represent or reflect official US policy, but this was advice to be taken into consideration.[68]

Members of the NSC staff and AID meanwhile continued to favour limiting Iran's spending even further, but this had effectively been made impossible by the Shah's *fait accompli* when he obtained *majlis* approval for purchases worth up to $200 million. Iran's warmer relations with the Soviet Union also presented the United States with another reason to be forthcoming on credit issues, if only to prevent Moscow from securing a foothold in Iran by selling the Shah arms at favourable prices. Moreover, on the question of an Arab threat to Iran intelligence, officials acknowledged that the Peterson Report was "more in line with the Shah's thinking."[69] As one CIA report warned, "it is quite conceivable that the Shah will use the Peterson Report to counter State Department arguments against immediate heavy expenditures."[70]

The findings of the Peterson Report undermined the US position *vis-á-vis* the ongoing negotiations with the Shah and exposed a number of rifts within the Johnson administration as to how the US should handle Iran. In an interdepartmental meeting between officials from the CIA and State and Defence Departments, the representative from AID presented a view of Iran that was "entirely negative." AID, a longstanding critic of the Shah's overspending and the State Department's soft

approach to Iran, advocated "tough handling of the Shah," not least because it doubted that the Iranian economy would be able to cope with the additional burden of a $200 million arms deal. James H. Critchfield, the chief of the Near East and South Asia Division in the Directorate of Operations, rejected AID's objections in no uncertain terms. Critchfield commented that the position adopted by AID had "shades of the 1961 Iran Task Force!" Clearly, there remained a strong sense within the State Department that the time for pushing modernization – which had reached its high-water mark in 1961 through the deliberations of Kennedy's Iran Task Force – had long since passed.

Raymond Hare, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs, admitted that AID's position was "probably sound" but dismissed it as "unrealistic and wishful thinking." Hare also acknowledged the diminishing influence the United States had over Iran, noting that "we have seen the end of the 'client relationship.'" Townsend Hoopes, of the ISA, also argued for a smaller amount than suggested by the Peterson Report. Although not quite in line with AID, Hoopes and Meyer advocated a $180 million package at 4 per cent interest; they hoped that the favourable interest rate would sweeten the comparatively low offer. However, Hoopes and Meyer encountered opposition for this offer from Secretary McNamara, who cited Congressional opposition to increasing the foreign military sales budget as a major obstacle.[71] The ambassador took his case directly to McNamara, making a personal plea that stressed the need to maintain some kind of leverage over the Shah. He argued for a reduction in prices and interest rates and concessions on research and development costs in order to come close to meeting the Shah's demands and thereby retain some influence.[72]

Further complications came from within the NSC staff. According to Saunders, there were two basic sides to the debate. There were those in the State Department that argued the United States needed to "sell the Shah pretty much what he wants" in order to appease the Iranian leader and retain close ties with Tehran. Strong objections were made to this position by AID, which predicted that "another large sale now will bring on enough financial instability within two years so that [the US will] have to bail the Shah out again."[73] However, Saunders advised both Howard Wriggens and Walt Rostow that they must sell Iran something. He pointed out that Lyndon Johnson had effectively made it impossible to *not* sell Iran something as "the president has led the Shah to believe we were considering what [to sell] – not whether."[74] Saunders accepted that Washington had a "general interest" in "keeping a US foot in the door," and without any sale at all the Shah would buy elsewhere and all

influence would be lost.[75] Even so, he argued that it was imperative that the US not acquiesce to every one of the Shah's demands. Therefore, Saunders suggested that the NSC needed to "stiffen [Meyer's] spine a little" and give AID's concerns greater consideration.[76]

On 21 May, Lyndon Johnson approved the extension of a further $200 million credit to Iran, split into four annual $50 million tranches. Despite his original reticence, McNamara sided with Rusk by justifying the new deal on the grounds that the Shah was going to purchase new equipment anyway, and the US had too much at stake in Iran to jeopardize the relationship between the two countries.[77] Rusk told Meyer to make it clear to the Shah that the "US would view with concern any major purchases outside this arrangement and would expect to consult with [the government of Iran] regarding affect of such purchases on Iran's economy."[78] By doing so, the Johnson administration was attempting to link together the Shah's military programme with Iran's modernization efforts. In addition, Charles Schultze, Director of the Bureau of Budget, strongly recommended that each tranche be subject to presidential approval in order to keep a short leash on the Shah's spending and give the US some measure of influence over Iran's economic development.[79]

Ultimately, because it ensured some degree of White House control over how Iran would spend its money on American equipment, the agreement approved by Johnson came relatively close to "the hard line" McNamara advocated, although it did not meet AID's even tougher recommendations. It was considered essential that the United States take this opportunity to remind the Shah of the American view that economic development was the surest means of maintaining stability inside Iran. This policy tied together Iranian military expenditure and economic development, which were considered completely separate issues by Tehran. Moreover, Tehran was likely to see it as an unwelcome attempt by the Americans to dictate terms to Iran. As Harold Wriggins wryly observed, "the Shah may scream." With this in mind, Wriggins also felt it was vital that the president be closely involved to keep Meyer in line and prevent him falling prey to the Shah's incessant demands.[80]

One of the key architects of modernization theory, Walt Rostow, adopted a pragmatic approach to the question of Iran's military expenditure by suggesting that there was "no point in losing a good sale." He also acknowledged the limits placed on America's ability to actually direct Tehran in any particular direction; after all, Rostow observed, the Shah "is determined to buy arms somewhere, the best we can do is to lean on the brakes."[81] This lack of influence over Iran's economic development worried the modernization theorist greatly. At Rostow's

recommendation, Johnson reminded the State Department that he was "deeply concerned over Iran's worrisome economic prospects…He regards the new $200 million as a planning figure subject to annual review…[and] asks that Ambassador Meyer tell the Shah of this concern."[82] Johnson's intervention indicated that there was still some interest in the higher echelons of the administration in the financial viability of Iran's modernization efforts.

Meyer, however, objected to the details of the new $200 million credit offer because the new package once again underlined the "Papa knows best" attitude that he and the Shah felt plagued US–Iranian relations.[83] Moreover, Meyer suggested removing what he saw as the "strait jacket" which limited Iran's spending flexibility and that "treating the Shah like an adult is the best long-range policy" if the US was to maintain influence in a country which was vital to American national security interests.[84] Whilst Meyer's objections were largely rejected by the NSC staff – in particular by Wriggins and Saunders, who reaffirmed the need to maintain a close eye on Iran's spending – Walt Rostow conceded the removal of a clause necessitating Iran consult with the US before making any non-American military purchases.[85] The issue of exactly who was to decide what Iran could buy was extremely important for the Shah, as any indication that the US had the final say in Iranian arms purchases was an affront to Tehran's independence. By conceding that Iran did not need to consult with Washington on non-American purchases, the Johnson administration made a small step towards limiting the amount of control it had over the Shah's spending. Ultimately, this trajectory would conclude with the decision in May 1972 by Richard Nixon to remove all obstacles to Iranian arms sales.

Despite the ongoing negotiations within the Johnson administration, the Shah provoked concern in June 1966 that he might purchase arms from the Soviet Union. State Department officials were apparently alerted to this possibility by the fact that the Shah accepted the US sales package "very calmly…[fearing] this means he's already made up his mind to buy elsewhere too."[86] This raised the potential for a "first-class dilemma," in the words of the head of the Iran Desk in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Franklin Crawford. Washington would be forced to make some concessions to compete with the generous Soviet offers but at the same time needed to show that its patience had a limit. Crawford also observed that the rumour of Iran buying Soviet arms was the tactic of "an inveterate bargainer" so also needed to be treated with caution. It was also vital that the US avoid "at almost any cost" a "showdown" with the Shah.[87]

On 8 June, Walt Rostow noted the likelihood that the Shah would attempt to "diversify" his arms purchases in order to avoid the problem that had beset Pakistan during the 1965 conflict with India.[88] As early as 28 May, the Shah noted that "one should not place all one's eggs in one basket." In defending Iran's foreign policy, he cited the Pakistan issue and US policy towards Nasser, stating that "the West [i.e., the United States] treats those who are their friends as a negligible quantity. As to others who bully them, they lick their boots."[89]

Whilst the Shah's rhetoric can be partially understood as propaganda to improve Iran's standing among other Afro-Asian countries, it also gives a sense of his grievance with the US. It could easily be read as a warning to the Johnson administration that the days of Iranian dependence on the US for arms and economic support were numbered. During a "rough" meeting with the Shah on 29 June, Meyer reported that whilst the Iranian leader appreciated the past support Iran had received from the United States, he was not entirely impressed with some of the limitations placed on the current US offer. Moreover, the Shah reiterated his disappointment with the US over its policies towards Pakistan and Nasser and alluded to the possibility of buying Soviet arms.

Meyer attempted to direct the Shah's attention away from this route but found him in an indignant mood:

> When I expressed personal hope that [the] Shah could avoid arms procurement from [the] Russians and indicated how it would complicate matters for us, [the] Shah took [a] firm stand. Rest of conversation was heavily punctuated with his insistence that Iran simply must have "liberty of action." He said he hoped USG [US government] would understand that his ideals are [the] same as ours and that "even behind our backs he supports US on Vietnam" but Iran's main concern is to "stand on its own feet," from security as well as economic and political standpoints. Instead of acting irritated, USG should realize that Iran's independent stance is best possible roadblock to Communist influence.[90]

Once again the Shah noted the significance of his support for Vietnam, which he argued the United States should be grateful for. His insistence that Iran needed to be free to have "liberty of action" was a thinly veiled criticism of what he saw as the Johnson administration's attempt to dictate Iran's policies through limiting arms sales to the country. In July, Kermit Roosevelt – the man behind the 1953 CIA coup and an old friend of the Shah – warned that it seemed as though the Iranian monarch felt

the "special relationship with his closest friend, America, is coming to an end."[91] The Shah continued to argue that it was in US interests for Iran to engage more closely with and buy arms from the Soviet Union in order to bolster Iran politically and give credibility to claims that Tehran was genuinely independent from Washington.[92] The main problem, as US officials saw it, was how to dissuade the Shah from buying Soviet, without adhering to his every whim.[93] However, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the US had "much to lose and very little to gain" if things continued as they were.[94]

Despite the Shah's intense annoyance, McNamara continued to oppose any further concessions and was unperturbed by Tehran's threat to buy Soviet arms, suggesting that if the Shah wished to risk relations with the US by doing so "he should feel free to try it."[95] Even Secretary of State Dean Rusk was increasingly exasperated by the Shah, siding with the secretary of defence in refusing to adopt the proposals suggested by Meyer.[96] However, in another letter to the Shah, the president accepted Meyer's insistent advice and three final concessions were made: on the price of research and development; delivery times; and the availability of 32, rather than 16, F4s.[97] In the end, the Shah did not obtain any sophisticated equipment from the Soviet Union, which would have seriously jeopardized his arms sales relationship with the United States. Instead, to save face, Iran bought $110 million worth of non-sophisticated equipment – mostly jeeps and anti-aircraft guns – from the USSR the following February. Ultimately, the combination of Johnson's concessions and the Shah's decision to purchase Soviet equipment signalled both the execution of his policy of independent nationalism and the fact that the ability of the United States to turn down the Shah's demands was in steady decline. Just as the rise of arms sales had seen a decline in modernization theory's influence in US decision making, it also reflected Washington's declining influence over Tehran.

Conclusion

While Lyndon Johnson and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi saw eye to eye on a number of important international issues, between 1965 and 1967 many serious questions were raised about the nature of the relationship between Washington and Tehran. While Lyndon Johnson very much appreciated the Shah's material, moral, and rhetorical support over Vietnam, the issue did not simply bring their two countries closer together. The problem was that US policymakers and the Shah had very different ideas about what the lessons of the Vietnam War were. In the Shah's

mind, Vietnam validated his belief that countries that shared borders with communist or potentially aggressive neighbours required a modern and effective military. Some officials within the Johnson administration, however, were reticent about extending further military credits to Iran and continued to believe that economic development remained the best defence against instability, which in turn would discourage and make communist subversion less effective.

The US decision to stop military supplies to Pakistan during its war with India was seen by the Shah as a shocking betrayal of an ally and proof that the US treated allies worse than antagonists. By contemplating buying arms from the Soviet Union and making greater demands for military credit, the Shah wished to avoid Pakistan's fate. The Shah's frustration was reflected in his decision to pursue Soviet support in building a long-awaited steel mill near Isfahan. This period of US–Iranian relations saw the Shah become increasingly disillusioned with Washington, frustrated by constraints placed upon Iran by the United States, and determined to assert his independence. The US, meanwhile, was coming to rely more heavily upon the Shah, for support over Vietnam and elsewhere, as well as the use of intelligence installations in Iran. The scales of dependence had not simply been balanced but now weighed more heavily in the Shah's favour; the US, in a comparatively weak position, depended on Iran more than ever and was able to influence the Shah even less.

The shifting level of US influence over Tehran accelerated the already declining influence of modernization theory over US policy. While pursuing economic development and modernization might have been the preferred path of some within the Johnson administration, the Shah adeptly exploited Washington's experience in Vietnam and policies regarding the Indo-Pakistan War to extract concessions from the United States. Unwilling to alienate the Shah, who had proven himself a valuable ally through his response to both crises, US policymakers sidelined efforts to steer Tehran down the path of modernization. Instead, as American influence declined, the Johnson administration facilitated the Shah's version of modernity by extending military credits to Tehran. The patterns seen in US–Iranian relations between 1964 and 1966 were amplified in the final years of Lyndon Johnson's presidency as the combined impact of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Britain's decision to withdraw from the Middle East, and the end of US AID to Iran signalled the effective demise of modernization in US policy towards Iran.

6
British Withdrawal, the End of AID, and the Six Day War

Commenting upon the relationship between Lyndon Johnson and the Shah, the American ambassador Armin Meyer once remarked that "when the Shah and the president get together the result is, as the old Persian proverb says, two stars come into conjunction."[1] Upon learning LBJ would not be seeking re-election, the Shah was "seriously concerned that without President Johnson's understanding and wise leadership there will be trouble ahead for this part of the world in general and for Iran in particular."[2] While the Shah was "greatly upset" by Johnson's decision, his concern was based on his pragmatic "fears [about the] effect on Iran's arms program."[3] Yet despite the propitious coming together of these two stars, Washington's relationship with Tehran during the final two years of the Johnson administration was not without its problems. It was a time of significant political change in the Middle East, notably the Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbours in June 1967 and the impending British withdrawal from East of Suez. The Iranian response to both of these developments demonstrated the Shah's growing confidence on foreign policy questions. Moreover, they illustrated the evolving nature of the US–Iranian relationship.

In addition to these regional developments, the tone of America's relations with Iran took on a new dimension as American economic assistance to Iran ceased in 1967. As Iranian oil production grew, it became increasingly difficult for the Johnson administration to justify continuing to provide aid, particularly to a Congress that wanted to reduce foreign aid and was disturbed by Tehran's relationship with Moscow. No longer able to utilize economic assistance, the Johnson administration was forced to rely on less direct assets, such as diplomatic massage, technical assistance, and cultural ties. More importantly, the loss of AID assistance as a bargaining tool further magnified the importance of Washington's military supply arrangement with Tehran. Without

economic assistance to offer as an alternative, it became increasingly difficult for US officials to refuse the Shah's shrill demands for military credit. The decision by the Johnson administration to commit to a five-year credit deal in 1968 set in stone the policy of providing extensive military credit to bolster Washington's diminishing influence over the Shah. In light of Iran's support for US policy during the Six Day War and Britain's impending withdrawal from the region, Tehran – that is to say, the Shah – became an increasingly vital component of US policy in the Middle East.

While the significance of modernization theory had already begun to wane during the Kennedy years, the final years of the Johnson administration effectively put an end to what little influence it retained over US policy towards Iran. Questions of development were subordinated to more pressing concerns of American national security in the Persian Gulf area. Now that the US was unable to impose an American blueprint for development onto Iran, Washington simply accepted the Shah's version of modernity. The Pahlavi regime's concept of a modern Iran was built upon the three central pillars of a modernized military, economic development, and the perpetuation of the Pahlavi dynasty. Although Washington's acceptance of Pahlavi modernization had begun under Kennedy, the shift in the power balance between the two countries was accelerated towards the end of the Johnson administration. By examining the role of the Six Day War, the anticipated British withdrawal, and the end of AID to Iran, this chapter demonstrates the significant shift in the dependency relationship that saw Iran increasingly able to wield even greater influence over the US by the end of Johnson's presidency. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the 1968 military credit agreement, which not only signified the demise of modernization's influence, but also established a policy of using military credit to retain influence with the Shah that would be followed faithfully – and ultimately extended enormously – by the Nixon administration.

The Six Day War and Iranian Oil

In June 1967, Israel went to war with its Arab neighbours. The Six Day War, as it came to be known, was the culmination of rising tensions in the region between the principal belligerents. On 5 June, Israel launched pre-emptive strikes against Egypt, quickly destroying her military. Those Arab nations that sent their militaries in support of Egypt – Iraq, Jordan, and Syria – were also soon defeated by superior Israeli forces. In

an attempt to prevent the war's escalation and Soviet intervention, the United States sent the Sixth Fleet to the region as a demonstration of American will. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union became militarily embroiled in the conflict, despite it being a war between their nominal allies or proxies.[4] Israel, meanwhile, seized new strategic territories, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights. On 22 November, a United Nations Security Council resolution, in theory, brought an end to the disagreements that were ignited by the war, but in reality merely exposed the immense difficulties ahead for Arab–Israeli relations.[5] For the United States, the Six Day War brought to the fore the need to achieve a stable peace, a regional balance of power, and the prevention of Soviet intervention or encroachment.[6] The conflict also came to be an important factor in US–Iranian relations.

Since the onset of the Cold War, US policy had sought to achieve a series of objectives in the Middle East that transcended bilateral relations with any specific country: to maintain the flow of oil to Western Europe and the United States; access through the Suez Canal; the containment of Soviet encroachment and influence; and maintain the regional balance of power.[7] These aims were largely embraced by both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Although the United States may have had cultural and historical ties to Israel and viewed with scepticism the radical pan-Arabism presented by the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, it preferred to use policies designed to prevent the region descending into conflict. This was most vividly put to the test during the 1956 Suez Crisis when President Dwight Eisenhower demanded Israeli forces withdraw from Egyptian territory following their military invasion.[8] However, despite JFK's efforts to persuade Egypt and Israel to temporarily place their animosity in the "icebox," he laid the foundations of Washington's "special relationship" with Israel.[9] As Warren Bass has noted, Kennedy

> sold major arms to Israel for the first time, paving the way for America to become, as it were, the arsenal of Jewish democracy; he began security consultations, paving the way for full-blown military-to-military joint planning; he gave Israel its warmest security assurances to date, paving the way for even more formal American commitments to repel Arab aggression; and he even replaced Marshall's old refusal to even think about domestic political constraints when handling Israel policy, paving the way for the misty-eyed invocations of eternal US–Israel friendship that are staples of any modern presidential aspirant's standard foreign policy speech.[10]

Lyndon Johnson, therefore, "inherited from Eisenhower and Kennedy what amounted to an informal alliance with Israel." Even so, Johnson's policy towards Israel, according to Douglas Little, was based upon geostrategic considerations that simultaneously depicted Israel as a counterweight to the radical Arab states and sought to prevent Tel Aviv from acquiring nuclear weaponry by providing conventional military supplies.[11]

As a non-Arab but Muslim country closely aligned with the United States, Iran held a unique position in the Middle East, especially on the important question of Arab–Israeli tension. Unlike Arab nations like Egypt, Iran had *de facto* recognized the state of Israel since 1950 and for many years supplied Tel Aviv with oil. In the late 1950s, the Israeli intelligence service Mossad helped the CIA set up and train Iran's secret police, SAVAK.[12] During the 1960s, Iran and Israel remained friendly, although as one Israeli official noted, "Israeli operations here in Iran are almost clandestine" because of the delicate nature of Arab–Israeli–Iranian relations.[13] Iran's recognition of Israel strained her relationship with Egypt to the extent that in 1960 diplomatic relations were abandoned.[14] Deeply concerned about the anti-monarchical rhetoric and record of Nasser's radical pan-Arabism, the Shah saw Egypt as the gravest threat to his regime.[15] Indeed, the Shah frequently justified his demands for larger sums of military credit by citing the threat Nasser's bellicosity posed to Iran. These fears were amplified by Egypt's build-up of arms through Soviet support and her adventurism in the Persian Gulf, most notably during the Yemen civil war in the early years of the decade.[16]

Throughout the June crisis, the Iranian government attempted a delicate balancing act. To borrow Warren Bass's Shakespearean phrasing, for Iran the Six Day War presented the not-inconsiderable task of "trying to stay on cordial terms with the Capulets and the Montagues."[17] On the one hand, the Shah was pleased by Nasser's defeat and rejoiced that Israel had given him a bloody nose. On the other, as the leader of a Muslim nation, he could not be seen to openly support Israel and felt obliged to stand with his Arab brothers against Israeli aggression.

Given Iran's moderate disposition towards Israel, the United States believed it could play an important role in finding a peaceful resolution to the crisis. An indication of the significance the Johnson administration placed upon the political usefulness of Iran in mediating the crisis is shown by the respected diplomat Averell Harriman's meetings with the Shah in Paris during the conflict. Harriman was familiar with the Pahlavi regime, having previously visited Iran on a number of occasions, notably during the nationalization crisis in 1951 and more recently in

1961 when widespread discontent posed a serious threat to the regime. As one of the "wise men" of American diplomacy, Harriman's distinguished reputation was also well suited to flatter the Shah's ego.[18]

The Johnson administration hoped that Iran's diplomatic and economic ties with Israel might allow the Shah to influence Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's government. Three days prior to the outbreak of the conflict, Lucius Battle, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, urged Harriman to meet with the Shah to encourage him to maintain Iran's present friendly relations with Israel, continue providing oil to Tel Aviv, and to "counsel the Israelis to exercise military restraint."[19] Harriman met with the Shah on 5 June as the war started to set out the Johnson administration's hope that the Shah would use his influence to encourage moderate Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia, to distance themselves from Nasser.

In the Shah's eyes, the "long-term" problem for the region was the question of how to deal with Nasser. Harriman informed the State Department that "the Shah suggested we should give the impression we wanted to stop the fighting, but implied that he hoped Nasser's forces would be humiliated."[20] Sticking to his traditional theme, Mohammad Pahlavi took the opportunity to reiterate Iran's need for a strong military in case Iran were ever caught up in a regional war and to prevent the need for US intervention. The Shah also stated that "he must give lip service to Moslem solidarity" but assured the American diplomat that Iranian oil would continue to reach Israel.[21]

Whilst Iran played a relatively minor role in the overall diplomatic interactions concerning the Six Day War, Tehran was able to straddle both sides of the conflict. When Arab nations initiated an oil embargo and stopped the flow of oil to Western nations, Iran chose not to participate. By continuing to provide Israel and the West with oil, Iran undermined the embargo. Although this strengthened Tehran's ties with Tel Aviv, the Shah's support for UN Security Council Resolution 242, which called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied during the war, proved more problematic.[22]

However, as far as the Shah was concerned, his actions during the war demonstrated Iran's importance to both the United States and the American-dominated consortium that ran Iran's oil industry. The Shah felt that Tehran's policy of maintaining the flow of oil to Israel and Western Europe gave him leverage over the oil consortium. As Iran's domestic and international aspirations grew throughout the 1960s, the Shah became ever more adamant that Iran's oil production and income needed to rapidly increase in order to achieve his goals. For the US,

the oil question was also central to its relations with Iran. In February 1967, a State Department report highlighted the significance of Iranian oil in Washington's strategy towards the region, suggesting that "continued access for the West to Iranian resources, principally petroleum, on acceptable terms" was as important a factor as Tehran maintaining an independent, pro-West, popular government and stable economic development.[23]

In November, during ongoing negotiations with representatives from the oil consortium, Iranian officials cited Tehran's cooperation during the June crisis to pressure the American businessmen. The Iranian government stated that an increase in oil production would be a just "reward" for Iran's favourable behaviour, an argument which the consortium members categorically rejected.[24] The consortium's objection stemmed from their fear that a significant increase in Iran's oil production would have adverse effects on the world oil market as well as set unfavourable precedents that could be taken advantage of by other oil-producing countries.

After the Six Day War, the Shah informed Washington of his expectation that as "Iran is [the] most stable and trustworthy state in [the] Mideast" the oil consortium ought to have no objections to increasing its oil production.[25] Moreover, it rankled the Shah that even after the Arab oil embargo, "Arab producers should be allowed to blackball certain markets and still retain production levels higher than Iran."[26] When the Shah finally managed to visit the United States in August 1967, having had to postpone an earlier trip due to the outbreak of the Six Day War, he delivered the same line to consortium executives. According to Dean Rusk, the Iranian leader made the "predictable plea" that Iran's stability made it the best bet for the oil consortium, especially when compared with Iran's Arab neighbours and the turmoil caused by the recent war.[27]

As the protracted negotiations continued, the Iranian government made further requests that the Johnson administration step in to persuade the consortium to accept the Shah's demands. Having been told by the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Anthony Solomon that the US had "considerable sympathy for Iran's aspirations" but could not pressure the consortium into compliance, the Iranian ambassador, Hushang Ansary, argued that his country was in a "special position [and therefore] warrants special treatment."[28] Ironically, Iranian officials cited the cost of Iran's development programme – rather than its military expenditure – when appealing to the Johnson administration to support their push for an increase in Iran's oil income.

In December 1967, in response to Iranian demands, US officials began to put gentle pressure on the consortium. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow approved a plan to encourage the consortium to "be as generous as they can."[29] For the Johnson administration, the issue of oil production was increasingly troublesome in its relations with Iran. The Shah could not believe that the United States government could not simply tell the consortium companies to acquiesce to Iranian demands if it wanted to. Indeed, the oil issue was becoming yet another disharmonious influence on the state of US–Iranian relations. Once again, the United States was placed in a very difficult bargaining position: Washington relied on the Shah for containing the Soviet Union's encroachment into the Middle East; Iran was seen as a stable, Western-aligned, progressive country in an all-too-unstable and radical region; Iran also provided the West, including Israel, with invaluable oil, even during the Six Day War and ensuing Arab embargo, which, according to the Shah, was a position not without political risk. On top of all this, the Johnson administration was not yet willing to exert the kind of pressure on the oil consortium the Iranian government felt was necessary to resolve the negotiations.

The Shah quickly became disgruntled by what he saw as the consortium's intransigence and Johnson's unwillingness to help. In one meeting, Armin Meyer described him as "obviously smouldering…[and] using terms such as 'robbery,' thieves' and some unprintable epithets, [the] Shah professed to be completely disgusted with [the] consortium's behaviour."[30] In March 1968, the consortium reiterated to US officials that it could not meet the Shah's demands, while Ambassador Ansary informed his American counterparts that the Shah was "extremely disturbed by [the] status of consortium negotiations."[31] In a visit to Washington, Ardeshir Zahedi, the Iranian foreign minister, "stressed Iran's helpfulness in keeping its oil available during last June's crisis." He stated that "Iran thought that [its] alliance and friendship with US and UK, actions in June crisis, and constructive attitude on many international problems would have resulted in [a] different response."[32] To Iranian ears, Secretary Rusk's protestations that the US "cannot dictate to companies" rang increasingly hollow.[33]

By the end of March, in response to the Iranian government's dissatisfaction, the Johnson administration reluctantly pressured the oil companies to reach a compromise that would satisfy the Shah. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow met with executives from Esso, Mobil, Standard Oil of California, Texaco, Gulf, and Iricon to convey the US government's position on the dispute. Rostow began

by declaring that the Johnson administration "did not wish to cross the delicate line between political and commercial considerations nor did we wish to take responsibility for the negotiations." Despite this disclaimer, Rostow went on to argue that "there was a deep national interest in a mutually satisfactory outcome," citing Iran's increasing importance in the Middle East in light of Britain's impending withdrawal from the region and the threat posed by radical Arab nations.[34] Recalling the Shah's own arguments that Iran had risked a great deal with its relations with Arab oil-producing countries by circumventing their oil embargo the previous summer, Rostow emphasized the need to treat the Shah favourably in order to reduce the "possibility he would not cooperate with [the] West in [a] new crisis."[35]

With Iran demanding a rise in production of 16.5 per cent and the consortium adamant that the consequences of such a move would be "politically devastating to the world oil trade," the *New York Times* observed that the negotiations had "turned into a wrestling match in which each contestant is locked and immobile."[36] However, by 22 April, the combined pressure from American and Iranian government sources had finally prevailed as the consortium agreed to increase production by 16.8 per cent over the next five years.[37] This was due in no small measure to the pressure the Shah placed on the Johnson administration to support Tehran's claim as recompense for Iran's cooperative role during the Six Day War and the ensuing Arab oil embargo. Recognizing that if they did not side with the Shah on this matter his disillusion with the United States would only increase, American officials reluctantly added their weight to the pressure being brought to bear by Iran against the consortium. By putting pressure on the oil consortium to meet the Shah's demands, Johnson demonstrated that as Tehran's independence from Washington influence increased, the latter was more likely than ever to be forced into acceding to the Shah's demands.

Britain's Withdrawal

For decades, the key non-local international actor in Persian Gulf affairs had been Great Britain. However, the Second World War had left Britain economically devastated while the rise of nationalist anti-colonial movements throughout its empire signalled the end of her position as an imperial power.[38] Responding to severe economic pressure, Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced in January 1968 that Britain would withdraw its military presence from the Persian Gulf by the end of 1971.[39] This strategic and political decision was made within the context

of a broader reconfiguration of Britain's "East of Suez" policy that would bring to a close a period of British imperial involvement in the Persian Gulf that dated back to the early 19th century. Whitehall cultivated various relationships and treaties with the Gulf states, including Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, garnering in the process opportunities for economic exploitation and political responsibilities.

Long before Washington set its sights on Tehran, the British had been intimately involved in Iranian affairs. British interests were most notably – and controversially – focused through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), which began operating at the beginning of the 20th century and quickly established itself as an invaluable source of taxes for the British government.[40] Throughout the first half of the century, competition for influence in Iran came from Russia and then the Soviet Union. London and Moscow had repeatedly interfered in Iranian politics, signing a number of pacts in the early 20th century effectively granting both powers separate spheres of influence in the country.

As Saki Dockrill has pointed out, it was not a "breathless" decision to withdraw but the result of complex and varied considerations.[41] Unlike the United States, whose rapidly expanding military-industrial complex contributed to a booming post-war economy, Britain's finances had been left in ruins after the Second World War. In the years after the war, successive British governments were forced to consider Britain's role in global affairs in light of her struggling economy. The cost of empire, both in monetary terms and the impact of the wave of nationalism that swept across Western colonial domains, weighed heavily upon Whitehall officials. At the beginning of 1964, Conservative Defence Secretary Peter Thorneycroft had argued that due to Britain's obligations to CENTO, Kuwait, and other allies in the Persian Gulf, "we can look for no immediate relief from our Defence burdens."[42] To remove British forces from the Middle East would potentially cause instability in the countries that depended on them. Moreover, American officials feared that such a move would create a power vacuum that the Soviet Union or radical Arab forces would exploit. Despite these concerns, as early as November 1964 the incoming Labour "Wilson Government was, subconsciously at least, already prepared for the decision it finally reached in July 1967" to withdraw from East of Suez.[43]

The debates surrounding the future British role East of Suez centred upon economic factors and the high cost of maintaining a military presence in numerous parts of the world. Given Britain's precarious economic position and the Labour government's dedication to funding domestic welfare, British officials recognized that serious cuts in defence

expenditures were necessary. In March 1965, the Cabinet acknowledged the necessity of re-evaluating the value of Britain's participation in CENTO. British concerns were summarized as the need "to review our military commitments to Kuwait and the Persian Gulf in terms of the importance of maintaining stability in the area and ensuring the continued supply of oil from the Middle East." It was acknowledged that the British military commitments to the region would have to be reduced in light of the overall aim of decreasing the defence burden. It was also made clear that a quick, short-sighted withdrawal would be inimical to British interests, and "it was essential that this [extraction of British forces] should be achieved by planned and deliberate judgement."[44]

Britain was therefore determined to ensure an orderly withdrawal, and in 1966 a defence review highlighted the need to coordinate the early departure from Aden with forces in the Persian Gulf. The development of anti-imperial opposition to Britain's position in her largest imperial outpost in the area, Aden, made this a priority for 1968.[45] In fact, in light of the withdrawal from Aden and Britain's other regional obligations, Defence Secretary Denis Healey told the Cabinet office that "a small increase of facilities was necessary in the Persian Gulf in order to compensate for the loss of Aden."[46] As far as Iran was concerned, the government cited the importance of maintaining the regional alliance CENTO, despite its shortcomings, as a useful means of preventing the Shah from turning away from the West.[47] British officials shared American concerns about the spectre of a power vacuum in the Persian Gulf and reinforced the prevailing view that withdrawal had to be well considered, not sudden.[48] It was feared that "the humiliation of a disorderly withdrawal would weaken confidence in [Britain] in the Persian Gulf" and diminish her international prestige.[49] The decision to withdraw British forces from East of Suez, including from the Persian Gulf, by 1971 was conclusively reached in July 1967.[50] Just as the Six Day War had posed problems for American officials, the growing animosity in the Arab world towards Western states perceived to be pro-Israeli lent an even greater sense of urgency to the British withdrawal from the region.[51]

The Johnson administration, however, was far from enthusiastic about the prospect of a reduced British presence in parts of the world where Washington believed their presence contributed significantly to regional stability.[52] At a time when the United States was still deeply entangled in Vietnam, the prospect of her closest ally playing a diminished role on the international stage was met with consternation by US officials.[53] British Foreign Secretary George Brown reported in a Cabinet

meeting that Dean Rusk "had not concealed that he was shocked and dismayed." According to Brown, American disappointment was palpable: Rusk "clearly believed that we were opting out of our world responsibilities. He had said that it was the end of an era; and by that he had in particular implied that it was the end of the age of co-operation between the United States and ourselves. Confidence in us had been terribly shaken." The extent of the Johnson administration's frustration at the British decision was made clear when Rusk demanded that Britain should "[f]or God's sake act like Britain" and that the decision to withdraw was accompanied by "the acrid aroma of a *fait accompli*."[54]

Two specific factors lay behind American distress. Firstly, the Johnson administration worried that a British withdrawal would precipitate instability across vital parts of the globe. Rusk contended that the Middle East was already in "turmoil," a situation that would only be exacerbated by the loss of a significant British presence. Secondly, there was concern that British withdrawal from global affairs – which is essentially how the Johnson administration viewed the issue – would embolden isolationist strains in the United States that resented bearing the burden of stability and peace. As Rusk put it, "'If you scratch any American you find an isolationist'…They would ask why they should be interested in the peace of the world if the British were opting out." Brown dismissed this second issue by noting that Britain had its own domestic problems to focus on that were partially responsible for the need to cut defence expenditure in the first place. As for the issue of Middle East instability, Brown suggested that, in the Persian Gulf at least, instability was not necessarily the most likely consequence as "the risk of trouble between Iran and Saudi Arabia was less than previously."[55]

Writing to Prime Minister Harold Wilson just days before the official announcement, Johnson's disappointment at the British decision was made abundantly clear: "I cannot conceal from you my deep dismay upon learning this profoundly discouraging news…I can only wonder if you and all of your associates have taken fully into account the direct and indirect consequences."[56] However, despite the complaints of Johnson and Rusk, Wilson decided that the United States would simply have to adjust herself to Whitehall's decision.[57]

The real question now was one of timing. The original date for withdrawal was 31 March 1971, although some British officials argued for a delay of one or two years to appease countries like Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States. However, in the end it was agreed that "past experience had shown that, although her [the United States] initial reaction to our policy changes might be sharp, she was unlikely to take

retaliatory action against us in view of the common interests she had with us."[58] The British government therefore believed that Washington would simply have to accept the reality of British withdrawal.

By contrast, Iran had contemplated the departure of Britain from the Persian Gulf since at least as early as April 1965. In discussion with US officials, the Shah suggested that when British forces withdrew, Iran "will have to fill the vacuum."[59] The Shah's overriding concern was that as British influence receded, radical Nasserism would rush to replace it.[60] Following the resounding but temporary defeat of Nasser's Egypt by Israel in the Six Day War, the Shah continued to emphasize the threat Nasserism posed to the region. According to the Shah, this threat was composed of a concerted effort by Nasser and the Soviet Union to force the British out to allow Cairo and Moscow to gain control of strategically vital routes through the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. In a letter to Lyndon Johnson in February 1968, the Shah made the case for Iran's security interest in the Gulf in unequivocal terms, stating it "is a matter of life and death to us." Stressing Iran's determination to prevent hostile outside forces interfering in the Gulf, namely Egypt and the USSR, the Shah claimed that "so long as our heart beats and there is any strength left in us, we shall do our utmost to keep it a free zone and a stable one."[61]

The Johnson administration recognized that following Britain's withdrawal from East of Suez, Iran would play an even greater role in maintaining regional stability. The threat of Soviet encroachment remained the key concern among Washington policymakers. In March 1968, Moscow denounced any development that saw an American or British military presence in the Persian Gulf. Moreover, it made clear its support for "national liberation" movements that opposed Western imperialism.[62] Although relations between Moscow and Tehran were good, the Soviets had in recent years been cultivating closer ties with Iran's traditional regional rival, Iraq. In July 1966, the Iraqi prime minister visited the Soviet Union for the first time in either state's history, signalling an upturn in relations.[63] The following year, the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Nikolai Podgorny, visited Baghdad, praising the "development of friendship and cooperation" between the two countries.[64] US and Iranian officials saw Moscow's warm relationship with Iraq as a possible danger to the region, an opportunity for Soviet encroachment either through Baghdad or other means of subversion.

During the Shah's visit to Washington in June 1968, US officials, including the president and secretary of state, reiterated their hope that Iran, alongside Saudi Arabia, would fill the vacuum produced by the British withdrawal and "ensure the Gulf's security and progress."[65]

The consensus inside Washington was that without a significant British presence in the Middle East, the United States would come to rely even more heavily upon Iran; while Saudi Arabia was also a vital pro-American, oil-producing state, Iran had the benefit of appearing to be led by a progressive and reformist monarchical regime.[66] Yet there were tensions between Tehran and Riyadh on a number of issues, including the question of access to oil in the Gulf and their competing claims to sovereignty over the strategically important islands of Bahrain and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs.[67] The issue of British withdrawal, therefore, was not simply a case of handing the reins of regional security over to the Iranians. American and Iranian interests coincided upon their desire to keep Soviet and radical Arab forces out of the Gulf, so as to help maintain stability and a steady flow of Iranian and Saudi Arabian oil to the West.

However, on matters closer to Tehran's heart, such as relations with Riyadh, US–Iranian interests diverged; Iran focused on its perceived security interests and rights to oil exploration, while the US was more concerned with the wider Cold War ramifications of Saudi–Iranian friction. In order to ease the rising tension and facilitate regional stability, the American embassy in Tehran sought to persuade the Shah of the importance of improving relations with Saudi Arabia. When the US became aware that the Shah was going to cancel a visit to Saudi Arabia, Dean Rusk pointed out that to do so would be seen as an "affront" by Faisal that could "nullify" any chance of good relations between the "two greatest Gulf powers for [a] long period."[68] Such a development would undermine Washington's reliance on Iran and Saudi Arabia for stability in the Persian Gulf and containment of the Soviet Union.[69]

Ambassador Meyer reported a further possible problem if the Shah cancelled his visit. Moscow had recently told Tehran that any defence "gimmicks" – presumably involving the United States and Saudi Arabia in an anti-Soviet military pact – in the Gulf would lead to a serious downturn in Soviet–Iranian relations. Meyer therefore suggested that a cancellation of the Shah's visit to Saudi Arabia would be seen as a political victory by Moscow.[70] Mirroring Meyer's concerns, the Department of State drafted a letter for the president to send to the Shah urging him to meet his commitment to visit Saudi Arabia. As Walt Rostow noted in a memo to Johnson on the subject, "our main concern anyway is not the immediate issue of the visit but the future of the Persian Gulf. Good relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran will be necessary to keep things under control when the British leave. The alternatives are instability with a strong chance of an increased Soviet presence. We don't want to

have to replace the British, and we don't want the Russians there."[71] It is clear from Rostow's message that the Johnson administration viewed Iran as a viable alternative to the British presence in the Persian Gulf; if the United States was not going to replace Britain then much of the burden for regional stability would fall upon Tehran.

Despite the president's intervention, the Shah cancelled his visit to Saudi Arabia. The Shah demonstrated that he was willing to put Iranian concerns ahead of those of the US and that he would not adhere to American direction when it contradicted his own perception of Iran's interests. However, Walt Rostow noted that the speed of the Shah's response to Johnson's letter was an indication of how seriously he took the president's views; there was a sense within the embassy in Tehran that "the Iranians are feeling guilty and will be especially good for a while."[72] The real lesson was, as it had been for a number of years, that Iran no longer danced to an American tune. Where American and Iranian interests converged, such as regarding the broader issues of Soviet expansionism and the concomitant threats to the Persian Gulf, the Shah would happily follow policies closer to the Washington line. When Tehran's interests diverged from Washington's, however, the Shah rejected American advice he believed to be inimical to those interests. The fact that the United States was now coming to rely even more heavily on Iran for the maintenance of regional stability in light of Britain's impending withdrawal from the area further highlighted the dwindling influence US officials had over Iran.

The End of US AID to Iran

In November 1967, the closure of the US Agency for International Development (AID) offices in Iran reflected the major shift in the balance of the US–Iranian relationship that was taking place during the Johnson administration. In his speech marking the occasion, Lyndon Johnson celebrated "Iran's progress in land reform and its drive against illiteracy; its far-reaching development program and emphasis on private investment; and its many other vital reforms." Acknowledging that it was the end of an era, the president declared that "with one milestone behind us, we begin planting for a new harvest of friendship, trust, and shared hopes."[73] However, the termination of AID operations ended the use of economic assistance as a means to maintain American influence over the Shah and his programmes. Symbolically, the end of AID signalled the end of modernization in US policy towards Iran. In reality, the process of modernization's declining influence over Washington thinking

had begun as early as the Kennedy administration. Although some significant US officials continued to have faith in modernization as the best method for securing Iran's stability, the withdrawal of AID from Iran indicated the changing realities of the US–Iranian relationship. The United States was no longer, if it had ever been, in a position to push the Shah towards modernization. Instead, US officials were forced to accept that the central facet of US–Iranian relations was the need for Washington to maintain a close relationship with the Shah; this was not to be achieved through modernization but through the extension of military credits that would tie Tehran's arms programme intimately to Washington.

The decision to end the role of AID in Iran came about at a time when Congress was seeking to make reductions in foreign aid spending, making it increasingly difficult to justify giving economic assistance to a country like Iran, whose oil-based economy was enjoying rapid growth. Indeed, US officials no longer described Iran in the same dire terms that they had used in the early 1960s. In its 1967 Annual Review, the American embassy in Tehran, which was often prone to favourable impressions of its hosts, described Iran as an "oasis of success" and "evidence that close collaboration with [the] US can produce stability, progress, and reform."[74] Concerned about Iran's burdensome military expenditures, the State Department continued in May to convey its belief to Iranian officials that "economic improvement and social betterment are [the] best assurance in [the] long run against threats to Iran."[75] Even so, the State Department was pleased with the Shah's regime, in particular its stability and lack of apparent opposition.

A State Department paper argued that the National Front opposition had had "the wind taken out of its sails" by the regime's reforms, notably by "the cornerstone of the Shah's 'White Revolution,'" land reform.[76] Even at the height of the Six Day War, President Johnson took the time to suggest to Walt Rostow that the United States "look into ways of translating Iran's [development] experience to Vietnam."[77] American officials generally saw Iran's economic development, especially its booming oil industry, and social reforms as admirable elements of the Shah's drive towards modernization. However, the focus of both American and Iranian modernizers was firmly on economic development and social reforms designed to produce support for the regime rather than genuine political progress. The Johnson administration was happy to state that "hopefully [the] future will include political progress" but was ultimately more concerned that the Shah did not "bite off more than Iran can chew" in his economic and military modernization

programmes, which could destabilize the regime.[78] A politically unstable Iran, Washington feared, would invite Soviet, communist, neutralist, or radical subversion in Tehran and steer Iran away from the West.

A national policy paper prepared within the State Department articulated the Johnson administration's attitude towards political modernization in Iran and revealed inherent contradictions within US policy. It stated that the United States had a "stake in continuing modernization of the political and economic structure" of Iran. The paper went on to stress the need to widen the Iranian government's popular support, suggesting that the Johnson administration wanted to see political development from an authoritarian monarchical system of government to a more representative, albeit ill-defined, form. However, it also made the assertion that the monarchy was "the sole element in the country that can provide continuity for public policy"; that is to say, of all Iran's political figures, the Shah was most likely to perpetuate a pro-American, anti-Soviet foreign policy.[79]

The Johnson administration's commitment to the Shah's regime was made clear by the paper's claim that "while the United States is not necessarily committed to the support of any particular form of government in Iran, the Shah at present affords the best means for the safeguarding of our basic security interests in Iran and is the only personality on the scene who can lead the anarchically-bent Persians." While this assertion was disingenuous – since 1953 the United States had sought closer ties with the autocratic Pahlavi regime – it illustrates how US officials reconciled America's democratic ideals with the Shah's dictatorship. In theory, the United States sought to prolong the rule of the Shah as the best available leader to secure American interests whilst seeking some kind of political development. The allusions to political development, however, were undermined later in the paper by the policy of encouraging the Shah's White Revolution in order "to broaden the base of support for the regime by *whatever means make sense* politically and economically *in terms of the regime's basic stability*."[80]

The Shah was unlikely to introduce anything other than a facade of democratic institutions and practices – demonstrated by the generally compliant *majlis* and the necessity of SAVAK approval for all parliamentary candidates – as anything more meaningful could easily be construed as a threat to the regime's basic stability. By putting "the regime's basic stability" at the heart of its objectives in Iran, the Johnson administration neglected political in favour of economic development. Therefore, whilst the United States occasionally made noise about the importance of political development, these instances were rare and always qualified

by the explicit reliance on the Shah's regime for the pursuit of American interests. Instead, economic development was emphasized at every opportunity as a further way of ensuring internal stability.

Even whilst the Johnson administration's approach regarding modernization was becoming increasingly pragmatic, the Shah remained genuinely interested in pursuing a developmental agenda for his country. Of course, political development was low on the Shah's list of priorities – he had no intention of relinquishing his throne to liberal democracy – but he did seek economic and social modernization. In meetings with US officials, he would often note his interest in the type of work done by prominent development figures such as David Lilienthal, particularly in the realms of agriculture and water supply. Echoing the kinds of projects headed by Lilienthal and other American advocates of modernization, the Shah's White Revolution had incorporated the nationalization of Iran's water and forests into its original ten-point programme.[81] Social issues, such as women's rights, were also integral to the Shah's vision for Iran, partially as an attempt to bring the country in line with European countries, but also as an effort to undermine the power of the conservative clergy. Combating Iran's poor literacy rate was also an issue close to the Shah's heart. He sought, without success, Lyndon Johnson's involvement in a proposal for a global UNESCO literacy project by dedicating one day's defence expenditure to the scheme; for Iran, just one day in 1966 would raise $700,000.[82]

With the closure of its AID programme in Iran, however, the United States was far less able to make meaningful economic contributions to the Shah's projects. In May 1968, the Johnson administration proposed a new scientific agreement between Iran and the United States precisely as a response to the end of the use of AID funds. It would encourage and formalize "scientific and technical exchange" and "would indicate that our intention to maintain close ties has not diminished with the termination of our assistance program."[83] As Walt Rostow explained to Lyndon Johnson on the day of its announcement, the new agreement was "just one more step in building a broad network of normal contacts between our societies…[and] it's symbolic of our new and more mature post-AID relationship."[84] Agreements such as this reflected the diminishing influence the United States had over the Iranian regime even while it demonstrated its continuing interest in Iran's future. Although modernization would remain a consideration for US officials, especially those who saw it as the most viable means of ensuring stability within Iran, it was no longer a central feature of US policy.

Programmes such as the scientific exchange agreement might have had some psychological effect in strengthening ties between Iran and

the United States, but as American economic assistance ended, it was the military sales relationship that remained the only meaningful tool for exerting influence over Tehran. As the Shah prepared to visit the United States in the summer of 1968, he was in a very strong negotiating position thanks to his policy regarding Israel and continuing oil supplies to the West during and after the Six Day War, Iran's own exploding oil income following negotiations with consortium companies, and Washington's dwindling influence over Tehran's domestic policies thanks to the end of American economic assistance. As Armin Meyer had long argued, the "elimination of US economic and military assistance, [meant that] much depends on US response in major dynamic area [of] our relationship – military sales – on which Shah focuses as barometer [of] US intentions."[85]

As Lyndon Johnson's presidency reached its end, Washington's relationship with Tehran was increasingly reliant on the extension of military credits to Iran; lingering impulses to push the Shah towards reform and modernization were subjugated to the perceived need to maintain close ties with the Pahlavi regime in order to bolster America's national security in the Gulf region. Discussions between US and Iranian officials during the Shah's visits to the United States in August 1967 and June 1968 illustrated the emphasis that was now placed upon military credits. Prior to the Shah's visit in August 1967, Washington assumed that he would make a request for an increase in military credits.

US officials knew that despite having reached two separate deals for $200 million of credit over four years in 1964 and 1966, and having purchased arms from both Great Britain and the Soviet Union in the past year, the Shah was still determined to improve Iran's military capabilities.[86] During his meetings with the Shah, Lyndon Johnson stated that he would do "everything possible to meet [the Shah's military] needs."[87] This was precisely what the Shah had wanted to hear, and according to Dean Rusk the visit was "eminently successful in convincing him that [the] US regards him as [a] true friend whose constructive and progressive leadership we greatly admire and whose counsel we highly value."[88] Indeed, three months later, the Shah took Johnson at his word and wrote to the president to request $800 million of military credit over the next five years.[89]

Rostow recognized two immediate difficulties facing the Johnson administration in meeting the Shah's demands. Firstly, Congress was already concerned about Iran's military spending and therefore unlikely to approve the extension of more credits. Secondly, as Rostow observed, it would be difficult to put "the brakes" on Iran's military spending with

her oil profits increasing.[90] Iran's income from its oil resources meant that its economic situation was far less perilous than it had been at the beginning of the decade, making it extremely problematic for US officials to deny Iran military credits that it could now more easily afford. Moreover, the Shah made it clear in a meeting with Averell Harriman that although he was determined to purchase American arms, he was more than willing to go elsewhere – Britain in the first instance but also suggesting the Soviet Union as a possible source.

While he stated that he "would hesitate [for a] long time before" buying sophisticated arms from Moscow, it was the first time any Iranian had raised the possibility of doing so – a clear suggestion that even the Soviet Union was not off limits for Iran if the United States did not provide what the Shah needed.[91] The Johnson administration did not object to Iran buying British arms, so long as the military expenditure did not derail economic development, but was determined to prevent Tehran purchasing sophisticated arms from Moscow, as this would increase Iran's reliance on the USSR and allow the Soviets to develop its presence in Iran. The Shah made it clear that while he was willing to adjust his demands for credit, the impending British withdrawal from the region meant that he could not drop much below his original $800 million request.[92]

Despite the American desire to reduce the Shah's military expenditure, by the end of March 1968 a reluctant consensus had formed on the need to provide some credit to Iran. Harold Saunders of the NSC staff, for instance, stated that he did not object to the United States providing some military credit to Iran; he objected instead to the fact that the Johnson administration did not question the Shah's estimate of Iran's military requirements. Ultimately, Saunders recognized that to retain any influence with the Shah the United States needed to extend military credit, but he felt that it was important for US officials to acknowledge that the reasons for doing so were on purely political, rather than military, grounds.[93] Armin Meyer put it in stark terms when he wrote that "after weighing all factors, we continue [to be] convinced we have no choice but to proceed with program promptly, if we are to retain healthy friendship with Iran and if we are to maintain effective influence not only on Shah's armament but on key role which he will inevitably play in Gulf."[94] The Johnson administration had clearly concluded that supporting the Shah's military programme by providing extensive credit was politically essential.

In April 1968, the policy of extending military credit to Tehran was solidified with a new deal, just two years after the last $200 million

agreement in 1966. The Interdepartmental Regional Group recommended that the United States provide $100 million of credit in 1968 and make an agreement with the Iranian government to reconsider the credit situation on an annual basis over the next five years. The group gave a number of reasons justifying the decision: the power vacuum that would be created by Britain's withdrawal; the provision of ample support to radical Arab states by the Soviet Union; the need to prevent Tehran turning to Moscow for arms; and finally, the importance of maintaining close ties with Iran. At the end of the month, Lyndon Johnson approved both the initial $100 million credit for 1968 and the five-year understanding to negotiate and provide military credit on an annual basis following requisite intergovernmental studies.[95] Although the level of credit was not determined for subsequent years, and would be assessed annually, it tied Washington into an arms sale agreement through until at least 1973.

Moreover, only the most innocent observer would believe that the credit granted in the remaining years of the deal would be less than $100 million. The Johnson administration set in place a policy that effectively guaranteed the extension of $100 million annually for five years, in addition to the $100 million that remained from the 1966 deal. The loss of AID assistance, which represented the symbolic end of modernization in US policy, coincided with a military credit policy that tied the United States and Iran even closer together. Furthermore, the use of military credit reflected both the Shah's influence over Washington and the centrality of arms sales to Tehran as the primary feature of US–Iranian relations.

Conclusion

The Six Day War, Britain's decision to withdraw from the Middle East, and the end of US AID to Iran ensured that by the time Lyndon Johnson left the White House, the United States relied even more heavily upon the Shah's regime in Tehran to secure its interests in the area. The Shah adeptly exploited Washington's dependence on him to extract concessions regarding his military expansion programme. As the doors of the AID offices in Tehran closed for the final time, the development-minded tools and agenda that AID favoured were no longer available to US officials. Although modernization had taken a backseat to other considerations throughout the Johnson administration – namely maintaining a close relationship with the Shah – the end of AID in Tehran was a symbolic reminder that arms sales, not economic assistance, were now the

key component in US policy towards Iran. Without the use of economic assistance, and knowing that they were increasingly forced to rely on the Shah in light of the impending withdrawal of Britain's dominant political influence in the region, American officials were hard-pressed to dissuade the Shah from making large military purchases.

By the end of the Johnson administration, Washington had agreed to extend a not-yet-determined amount of credit annually for the next five years; the first figure was $100 million in 1968, which was assumed by US officials to be the maximum and by the Shah to be the minimum for future years. This set a precedent that was followed faithfully by Richard Nixon. The emphasis on military sales as being central to the US–Iranian relationship overshadowed any lingering impulse towards modernization that remained in Washington's thinking about Iran. Although US officials still believed economic and social development to be Iran's best defence against instability, their capacity to push the Shah towards reform and development was undermined by the fact that Tehran was no longer dependent on American largesse. Indeed, the reverse was now true; increasingly, the Shah led the way, while the US was compelled to follow. Upon taking office, President Nixon continued Johnson's policy of extending a line of credit to the Shah. While Nixon was, of course, more than happy to sideline questions of modernization, his policies were, in fact, largely based on those of his predecessor.

7
Richard Nixon, the Shah, and Continuity

In April 1969, the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, visited the United States to attend the funeral of President Dwight Eisenhower and to meet the new American president, Richard Nixon. Nixon was pleased the see the Shah again, having first met him in Tehran as Eisenhower's vice president shortly after the coup in 1953 that restored the Shah to the Peacock Throne. Nixon later recalled that first meeting fondly, writing that he "sensed an inner strength in him, and…felt that in the years ahead he would become a strong leader."[1] With characteristic bluntness, Nixon once told colleagues, "I like him, I like him, and I like the country. And some of those other bastards out there I don't like, right?"[2] He was, in his own words, "stronger than a horseradish" for the Shah.[3] The Shah was pleased to see the new president again and particularly delighted that their meeting overran by an hour.[4] Buoyed by the meeting, he spoke of the United States and Iran as "natural allies" and his own country as a "bastion of stability and progress in an increasingly unstable area."[5] For his part, Nixon would often speak of their strong bond, citing "the personal friendship that we have had the opportunity to enjoy, going back over so many years."[6]

In recent accounts, it is this "friendship" that has come to define US–Iranian relations during the Nixon years. The Nixon administration is often framed as a clearly distinct phase in US–Iranian affairs that ushered in a new special relationship between Washington and Tehran that differed markedly from the precedents set by previous US administrations. Barry Rubin's assertion that Nixon "inaugurated a turning point in United States policy toward Iran" typifies the conventional account of US–Iranian relations in the early 1970s.[7]

Other historians have stressed the significance of Nixon's personal feelings regarding the Shah as the primary cause of this realignment. Roham Alvandi writes that "[b]ecause of his long-standing friendship

with the Shah, Richard Nixon brought new ideas to the White House about the Pahlavi monarch." "The shift in US Gulf policy from balancing under Johnson to Iranian primacy under Nixon" reflected the latter's high regard for the Shah, which resulted in a willingness to rely increasingly upon Iran – especially compared with its regional ally/rival Saudi Arabia – to ensure security in the Persian Gulf.[8] According to this school of thought, then, the new policy culminated in Nixon's decision in May 1972 to remove previous restrictions and permit unlimited arms sales to Tehran.

This argument depends upon the assumption that a genuine friendship between Nixon and Mohammad Pahlavi existed. Unsurprisingly given the short-sighted nature of US policy towards Iran and the tumultuous events that rocked both countries at the end of the 1970s, former members of the Nixon administration have rejected the notion that the president and the Shah were "bosom buddies" or "that personal friendships or a predilection for authoritarian rulers shaped American support for the Iranian leader."[9] While one is wary of siding with Henry Kissinger on most matters, he is right to suggest that some of the attention given to Nixon's friendship with the Shah ought to be refocused. In this respect, Stephen McGlinchey focuses on the evolution of Washington's arms sales policy towards Iran in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[10] In one important respect, McGlinchey is correct to frame Nixon's 1972 decision as "revolutionary" because it removed all restrictions on Iranian arms purchases, in particular the need for US appraisals and approval of sales on military grounds.[11] Even so, such a conclusion belies the precedents upon which Nixon's decision was based and the Shah's ongoing role in wresting concessions from Washington.

This chapter, therefore, rejects the misleading assumption that Nixon's fondness for the Shah "transformed" US policy towards Iran. The Nixon Doctrine, which was central to the administration's policy towards Iran, grew out of previous administrations' policies; it was neither revolutionary nor transformative. In fact, it adhered closely to a number of precedents already embraced by Lyndon Johnson; rather than representing a new direction in US policy, the Nixon Doctrine articulated principles that had been driving Washington's policy towards Tehran for a number of years. Moreover, Nixon's embrace of the Shah reflected the evolving nature of the US–Iranian relationship and the changing geopolitical dynamics of the Persian Gulf region, not least the burgeoning alliance between the Soviet Union and Iraq. Iran, therefore, was not so much a test case for the Nixon Doctrine, rather the policy example upon which it was based.

Nixon and His Foreign Policy

The "odd alliance" between Nixon and his national security advisor, Kissinger, sought to implement "a strategy that would combine the tactical flexibility of the Kennedy–Johnson system with the structure and coherence of Eisenhower's."[12] Combining Nixon's general mistrust of others and Kissinger's sense of superiority with their shared preference for close control of policy, they "[concentrated] power in the White House to a degree unprecedented since the wartime administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt."[13] While Kissinger replaced almost everybody from Lyndon Johnson's NSC staff, Harold Saunders was kept on as the resident Middle East expert following Robert Komer's departure. According to Saunders, Nixon and Kissinger were "interested in having some continuity of staff in an area about which they didn't really know very much."[14] Although Nixon recognized the Middle East, particularly the Arab–Israeli conflict, "was a potential powder keg,"[15] the region "stood beyond the major areas of focus" of the Nixon administration in its first few years.[16] Although the Nixon era represented a departure in some areas of US foreign policy, particularly in the way it was formulated, with their attention drawn elsewhere, Nixon and Kissinger adopted Iran policies that exhibited a strong level of continuity from those of Lyndon Johnson.

Central to Nixon's policy towards Iran was his so-called Nixon Doctrine, which sought to "delegate to certain regional allies the manpower burden of defending their neighbourhoods against communism."[17] Initially formulated as a response to the quagmire in Vietnam, it "was soon cast as a global rather than a primarily Asian strategy."[18] Given Iran's strategic importance, the Shah was seen as "a likely fellow…who could be helpful…[and hopefully] could maintain some stability and some… pro-American discourse in that area."[19] Indeed, as Walter Isaacson has wryly remarked, Iran was "about the only regional ally pumped up" by the Nixon Doctrine even if in the end it "did not prove a wise investment strategy."[20] Mohammad Pahlavi welcomed the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine and adopted much of its rhetoric, declaring that the "time had passed when great powers could intervene in [the Middle East] and Asia."[21]

As Douglas Little argues, "the Johnson administration had drafted the blueprint, Richard Nixon gave the new US strategic doctrine in the Middle East its name."[22] Iran therefore did not become a test case for the Nixon Doctrine. In fact, the reverse is true: throughout the 1960s, US policy in Iran and the Middle East more broadly had served as a prime

example of the Nixon Doctrine in action before the president had even put his name to it. As Douglas MacArthur later observed, "The Nixon Doctrine didn't startle me, or ring any sudden bells because, I mean, this is precisely what had been going on. We had been assisting countries that we felt were vulnerable, to put themselves in a position to maintain their independence."[23]

For the most part, the new administration had its sights set on other international issues, so Nixon embraced a high degree of continuity from his predecessor in those areas that did not warrant his attention.[24] Nixon's policies towards the Persian Gulf focused upon maintaining the region's security through cooperative engagement with Iran and Saudi Arabia as the two most powerful Gulf states.[25] Even so, an NSC Interdepartmental Group for Near East and South Asia assessment described Iran as a "vital" American interest, due in part to its position as one of the strategically important Northern Tier countries.[26] The Nixon administration also recognized the significance of the impending withdrawal of British military forces from the Persian Gulf, which could "create a power vacuum in this oil rich area."[27] Noting the impact this would have on the political landscape of the region, a National Intelligence Estimate in January 1969 suggested that it would give Iran the opportunity to "vigorously [assert] its claim to a leading position" in the Gulf.[28] In light of Britain's intention to have completed its withdrawal from East of Suez by the end of 1971, the Nixon administration gradually chose to embrace the Shah's willingness to adopt a leading role in maintaining the stability of the Persian Gulf.

Oil, Military Credit, and Continuity

During his visit to Washington in October 1969, the Shah suggested that Iran be given a special quota to sell greater quantities of oil to the US. According to the Shah, the deal would generate around $400–500 million profit that Iran would then spend on "military and civilian equipment."[29] Echoing the principles of the Nixon Doctrine, the Shah reasoned that "special relationships of this kind could [help enable the US to] exercise an influence for stability and peace without…having to become too directly or overtly involved" in dangerous parts of the world.[30] For US officials, such a deal would strengthen relations with Iran and ease Washington's balance of payments problem, but it would also alienate other oil-producing countries and potentially disrupt the oil market.[31] During the summer of 1970, the Nixon administration rejected the Shah's offer on the grounds that the economic repercussions

of granting Iran special status were too great to ignore.[32] By rejecting the opportunity to purchase Iranian oil – the profits from which the Shah had promised to spend on American military equipment – Nixon showed he was not yet ready to fully indulge the Shah's military spending habits.

Even so, Nixon continued to back the Shah in his ongoing negotiations with the oil consortium that operated Iran's oil industry, instructing Assistant for International Economic Affairs Peter Flanigan to inform the US companies that "unless they help us on this I shall reverse the oil import decision. This is an order. No appeal."[33] Flanigan was ordered to "tell these oil barons – American security is vitally involved."[34] During a dispute between the Persian Gulf members of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), led by Iran, and the oil companies, Nixon sent Undersecretary of State John Irwin to Tehran to expedite a solution and reassure the Shah of Washington's support.[35] The negotiations concluded with a deal that granted the Persian Gulf nations an increase in their oil income by $1.3 billion annually.[36] The Shah's closest advisor, Asadollah Alam, described the Shah's success in the oil negotiations as "a blaze of glory…a triumph for the ShahanShah, who is rapidly assuming leadership not only over the Persian Gulf, but the Middle East and the entire oil-producing world."[37] Hyperbole aside, Iran was assuming an increasingly dominant position in the region due to its growing oil income, Britain's withdrawal, and the Shah's role in challenging the oil companies. While these developments contributed to major changes within the infrastructure of global oil, Tehran's recent successes convinced the Shah that he could now afford the military equipment he had long sought without needing to rely on American credit.[38]

Like their predecessors in the Johnson administration, Nixon's foreign policy advisors recognized that Washington's declining influence over Tehran meant they would increasingly have to cater to the Shah's aspirations when forming policy. Nixon and Kissinger's emphasis on a realpolitik approach to international affairs and lack of interest in the modernizing impulses of Kennedy and Johnson officials is often seen as marking a clear end to the influence of modernization on United States foreign policy. Despite the declining emphasis on modernization, US officials welcomed Iran's "extremely rapid rate of economic development" in the early 1970s.[39] The clearest difference between the Nixon and Johnson administration was Kissinger's disdain for the Kennedy-era enthusiasm for pushing countries towards reform.[40] However, to assume that Kissinger's appointment as the president's national security advisor caused Washington to eradicate the Kennedy–Johnson emphasis

on Iran's economic development and, therefore, that this represents a distinct departure in US policy towards Iran, fails to capture the significance of two vital factors.

Firstly, during Lyndon Johnson's time in office, US influence over Iran's spending and economic development had already declined enormously as the Shah asserted his independence from American meddling and Iran experienced a dramatic increase in its oil income. The strategy of extending military credit adopted by the Johnson administration owed more to Washington's desire to maintain close relations with Iran than it did to any lingering impulse towards pressuring the Shah on issues of reform and development.

Secondly, for the first three years of the Nixon administration at least, both the president and Kissinger had their attention occupied elsewhere. Despite Nixon's allegedly close relationship with the Shah, he was more focused on pursuing detente with the Soviet Union, working on an opening to China, and extricating the United States from Vietnam than he was on Iran.[41] Having postponed a trip in 1969, the president only visited Iran once while in office in May 1972. The scant attention afforded Iran by Nixon and Kissinger up until that trip facilitated a remarkable degree of continuity with the Johnson administration, which manifested in both their policies and internal debates within policymaking circles.[42] For instance, although Johnson had succumbed to the Shah's frequent requests for military credit, the disquiet of some US officials about Iran's military expenditure persisted after Nixon's election. As one State Department report put it, "The Shah's appetites for [military] equipment keeps us constantly uneasy." Moreover, there remained concern regarding "the economic burden created by his [the Shah's] military establishment, its impact in terms of skilled manpower absorption and availabilities, and its real military effectiveness."[43]

The concern about the high economic burden of Iran's expanding military was compounded by the prevailing view in Washington that "there is no immediate military threat to Iran that would justify new inputs of military equipment." Moreover, it was argued that "Iran could not afford extensive new arms purchases and still maintain the level of economic development that the Shah considers necessary for political stability…*Increased military spending could thus lessen rather than enhance Iranian security.*"[44] Important elements within the Nixon administration therefore not only saw economic development as central to achieving the goal of Iranian stability but were actually sceptical about *increasing* arms sales to Tehran. For at least his first few years in office, Nixon was as cautious as his predecessors about overextending arms sales to Iran.

Furthermore, the report echoed concerns expressed by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations that the Shah's military expenditure would put Iran's economic development – still seen by many as the key to the country's stability and thus security – in jeopardy. Clearly, despite Kissinger's lack of interest in modernization, some residual support remained among US officials for policies that privileged Iran's economic development. The declining emphasis placed on development issues towards the end of the 1960s and early 1970s reflected Washington's declining influence over Tehran. The Nixon administration followed the Johnson White House by prioritizing the extension of military credit as a means of maintaining – at best – influence over and – more likely – a close relationship with the Shah of Iran, even whilst officials within the State Department continued to believe economic development was an essential prerequisite for Iranian security.

The warnings about the Shah's military spending went unheeded, as the use of American military aid and credit was increasingly seen as the "touchstone" of the US–Iranian relationship.[45] By assuming that extending military credit to Tehran would allow the US to minimize the impact on Iran's economic development of an excessive military expansion, Nixon's policy was a facsimile of that of Lyndon Johnson. In April 1969, an NSC Interdepartmental Group for Near East and South Asia meeting recommended that the US maintain the policy set forth by the Johnson administration by providing $100 million of military credit to the Iranian government. The group asserted that maintaining a close military sales relationship with Tehran was the best way "to limit pressures to divert Iran's resources unnecessarily to military purposes."[46] The Nixon administration's objective of achieving some degree of influence over the Shah in order to reduce the harm his military programme might do to Iran's economic development conformed with the policy pattern set forth by both Kennedy and Johnson. In reality, even while assumptions about universalistic development and the importance of economic development regarding Iran's stability and security continued to manifest in policymaking circles, questions of modernization rarely had much influence over US policy towards Iran. Rather than emphasizing reform and development, Washington focused on security issues and a desire to maintain a close relationship with the Shah, even at the expense of pushing a modernization agenda.

It was clear to most observers that the Shah was set on improving Iran's military capacity, both in terms of quantity and quality of equipment. If the US could not circumscribe Tehran's military spending, perhaps it could limit the rate and quantity of purchases, steering the Shah

away from unnecessary and expensive items. The Nixon administration adhered to the five-year commitment Lyndon Johnson had made to the Shah the previous year, considering it vital that the year's credit did not rise above $100 million "so as to avoid breaking through that annual planning ceiling with regard to subsequent years."[47] It was felt that if a higher figure was used, the Shah would have a precedent to support his case for increasing the level of credit. At this early stage in its life, the Nixon administration opposed any policy that would give the impression of sanctioning a dramatic increase in Iran's military spending.

When the Shah visited the US in October 1969, he considered it to be pretty successful on the whole.[48] Taking a slightly different view of events, Kissinger warned Nixon that the Shah was "subtly pressing the idea of a 'special relationship' with the US," primarily in the realm of military sales. Describing the Shah as "a man with a mission — putting Iran on its feet as a modern nation before he dies," he observed that the Iranian leader "will read any generally sympathetic answer as assent." Kissinger advised the president that "precise and frank talk about how far the US can and cannot go is important in avoiding later misunderstanding."[49] Iran already enjoyed favourable treatment as it received 30 per cent of the annual US military credit budget – $100 million out of a total $350 million – which also had to provide for "other special cases," such as Israel and Taiwan. Kissinger stressed that it was important for Nixon to make clear his "desire for close cooperation with Iran *within limits imposed by present US mood*."[50] At this stage, Nixon's chief policy advisor was clearly wary of overextending US support for the Shah's military demands.

Upon leaving Washington, the Shah was convinced that Nixon had all but promised him a new arms sale package, which raised his expectations of an American response.[51] It was clear that if a new offer did not materialize, the Shah would feel severely let down by the Nixon administration. The probability of him then turning to other countries – most likely Britain or France, although the Soviet Union could not be entirely ruled out – for arms was a serious risk. Moreover, such a development would be a dire manifestation of the Shah's annoyance with the United States. MacArthur warned policymakers in Washington they were "headed for some kind of crisis" unless some effort was made to placate the Shah. The ambassador therefore argued for an additional three or four years of military credit beyond those prescribed by the 1968 agreement. Such a move was, according to MacArthur, becoming a "necessity if we are to maintain our special relationship with Iran."[52] The purchase by Tehran of 136 artillery guns from the Soviet Union,

in MacArthur's eyes, further highlighted the urgency of the situation.[53] Indeed, Roham Alvandi has suggested that MacArthur's advice was "the first real test" of a "changing American attitude" that was coming to view Iran as the "paramount power of the Gulf."[54] MacArthur's suggestion was, according to Alvandi, the first foray of a newly evolving Nixon administration policy that increasingly favoured Iran – as opposed to balancing Iran with Saudi Arabia as envisaged in Johnson's "twin pillar" policy – as the primary instrument of American interests and regional stability in the Persian Gulf.

However, this formulation misrepresents what was, in reality, a continuation of the policy towards Iran set forth by Lyndon Johnson, not the initial steps of a new strategy. MacArthur's advice was itself an extension of LBJ's own policy, which had been advocated by his predecessors, Julius Holmes and Armin Meyer. Both Holmes and Meyer regularly advised the State Department to adhere to the Shah's frequent requests for military assistance, credit, and sales. MacArthur's timing also conformed to the pattern set during the Johnson administration. In 1964, the United States provided Iran with military credit worth $200 million in a four-year deal; then in 1966, an additional four-year $200 million credit agreement was reached after persistent pressure from the Shah. In 1968, the United States and Iran reached yet another agreement that was meant to last five years. Almost like clockwork, in response to the Shah's incessant pressure for more arms, the Johnson administration had agreed to new credit deals at two-year intervals – 1964, 1966, 1968. By suggesting an extension to the 1968 deal, the US ambassador was simply reiterating the precedent already established by Lyndon Johnson.

MacArthur was not, therefore, advocating a new policy; he was merely adhering to the same set of principles and assumptions that his predecessors had used to govern policy towards Iran. That is to say, Washington's most effective instrument for placating the Shah and maintaining some influence with him was the use of military credit. To suggest that MacArthur was signalling an early policy shift under Nixon is consequently misleading. In fact, Nixon followed very closely the policy set out by Lyndon Johnson. Kissinger advised Nixon that by extending the timeframe of military credit to Iran, the US would be "helping a friend as much as possible within restraints imposed by resources on both sides" and recommended the president approve a three- to four-year extension to the 1968 Memorandum of Understanding. The national security advisor even echoed the arguments of LBJ-era policymakers by stating that the new agreement could be justified as it was "not technically a commitment."[55]

In April 1970, Nixon duly agreed to the recommended extension of credit.[56] Almost exactly a year later, MacArthur echoed advice that had been given to Lyndon Johnson by suggesting that "it might be preferable for us to cede to a sale rather than to see the sale go to another supplier."[57] Far from embarking upon a new policy, the extension of military credit was seen by US officials as a tried-and-tested tactic for cultivating close relations with Tehran. Furthermore, when Kissinger advised Nixon that the Shah "seems in fact to be testing the limits of our capacity to help," he was indicating his wariness regarding the Iranian's desire for military credit and suggests that at this stage the Nixon administration did indeed have some limits.[58] In this way, the extension of further annual credit in 1970 was a continuation of Lyndon Johnson's policy and owed more to Iran's increasing independence from and influence over Washington than to Nixon's alleged fondness for the Shah.

The suggestion that Nixon was now embarking upon a policy distinct from that of LBJ is further undermined by an evaluation of the administration's arms sales policy by US officials in the summer of 1970. In July, members of the Departments of State and Defense sent a message to the embassy in Tehran stating, "we believe we must examine again the question of whether our military sales to Iran are in our overall interests, whether they may affect area security and stability, and whether there is a military requirement for this equipment."[59] Even whilst they noted the problems that would arise if the US suddenly reduced military sales to Iran, these officials argued that it was important for Washington to at least re-evaluate the wisdom of the policy.

During the Johnson administration, there had often been concern about Iran's military spending. Officials within the Agency for International Development and NSC staff, such as Robert Komer and Harold Saunders, worried that the Shah's military spending was damaging Iran's economic development, occasionally voiced misgivings about the wisdom of utilizing arms sales as a means of maintaining influence with the Shah. The Defence Department also questioned whether Iran really needed the quantity of equipment that the Shah was determined to acquire considering the actual military threats in the region. The origins of the July telegram suggesting a reconsideration of policy within the State and Defence Departments reflected this tendency for reticence regarding the military credit policy.

Douglas MacArthur rejected the idea of changing policy, arguing that "reversing our policy with respect to Iran…[the] price we will pay in terms of our national interest will…not be one that we can afford." Moreover, halting or reducing military sales to Iran "will inevitably

lead to a rupture of this special relationship which we have so carefully developed over [recent] years and which in light of Soviet penetration of Middle East seems from this vantage point more important than ever to us."[60] The State and Defence Departments responded to MacArthur's misgivings with another joint message acknowledging his perspective. However, they insisted that it was vital that the US "takes seriously… [the] annual military-economic review which, among other things, calls for examination of impact of Iran's military expenditures *on other pressing economic development* and social needs." The message stated that this should not be seen as "a signal that some basic USG policy change is in the offing." What it advocated was "that rational, conscious decisions are made only after all relevant factors have been taken into account."[61]

The embassy in Tehran was so alarmed by the recommendation by the Defence and State Departments that it called for a "fundamental US policy review with respect to Iran be considered ASAP by highest level of USG in the broad context of the over-all…role of Iran in terms of [the] Nixon Doctrine and our national interests in this vitally important part of [the] world where Iran is the solid and only dependable eastern anchor of our over-all Mid-east position."[62] Although nothing came of the embassy's request for a policy review in the end, it signalled both the level of division that existed within the Nixon administration at this time regarding US–Iranian relations and the extent to which the US had come to embrace the Shah.

Later the same year, the Defence Department and State Department clashed over whether to authorize the sale of two squadrons of F-4Es to Iran with the former questioning the military justification for the sale and the latter arguing for the need to appease the Shah.[63] Kissinger intervened, writing, "There is nothing to resolve. Pres. [Nixon] wants to go ahead [with the sale]."[64] The Department of Defence, recognizing that its protests were in vain, dropped its objections to the sale.[65] Clearly Nixon had a favourable attitude to the Shah and was willing to accommodate the Shah's demands; it is not the purpose of this chapter to claim that Nixon was unfriendly towards the Shah. However, in the early years of his administration, his policies hewed closely to that of Lyndon Johnson and were governed by strategic interests rather than personal preferences. Furthermore, the decision to sell the F-4E squadrons was made, once again, within the framework of limited US military credit. Nixon did not intervene and raise the annual credit ceiling to accommodate the Shah or remove it altogether as he would do in May 1972. Instead, Nixon and Kissinger, just as Johnson had, maintained the policy of using military credit as a means of keeping the Shah happy.

The Persian Gulf, the Soviet Union, and Nixon's Visit to Tehran

According to former British ambassador Denis Wright, 1971 – the year that Iran celebrated the 2,500-year anniversary of the Persian Empire amidst the ruins of its ancient capital of Persepolis – was "a turning point in the Shah's make-up."[66] Even whilst describing the event disparagingly as Iran's "debutante ball," General Ellis Williamson, head of the US Military Advisory Mission in Tehran, later noted that for the Shah it demonstrated that his country had now joined "the community of advanced nations."[67] In press conferences, the Shah epitomized Iran's growing confidence by stating that Iran "valued international friendship, [but] stood on its own feet and had no need of anyone."[68] Echoing the language of American modernization theory, Iranian newspapers expressed delight that "annual per capita income has climbed to $400, thus placing Iran on a new level of development."[69] Just as American officials saw in economic development the key to Iran's long-term stability, the Shah believed that modernization would bring prosperity to his people, prestige to himself, and security for his regime.

However, Iranian modernization did not necessarily adhere to every aspect of that envisaged by US officials. For starters, now that Iran's relationship with the Soviet Union was on a firmer footing since the rapprochement that began in the early 1960s, the Shah was increasingly willing to make use of his northern neighbour's vast resources for his own ends. The biggest Soviet–Iranian project of the late 1960s was the joint effort to provide Iran with a steel mill near Isfahan. In cooperation with Moscow, other projects soon followed, including construction on a dam on the Aras River, designed to produce electricity for the local region.[70]

The Shah's confidence was further bolstered by the death of two of his great rivals in the previous year – former head of SAVAK and erstwhile usurper to the Peacock Throne, General Teymour Bakhtiar, and the president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser.[71] The death of Nasser – "one of his greatest rivals" for political and ideological influence in the Middle East – was a greater moment for the Shah, and Iranian officials received the signals for "intimate relations" emanating from Anwar Sadat's new government in Cairo with enthusiasm.[72] By August 1970, the Shah felt able to joyously declare, at least in private, that "the Egyptians are really crawling on their hands and knees [to us]" when Cairo proposed a joint initiative to discuss the security of the Persian Gulf. It is interesting to note that when Asadollah Alam suggested that the Egyptian

proposal was not a sign of flattery but an attempt to put pressure on her other rival in the Gulf, Iraq, the Shah met his scepticism with "stony silence."[73] Clearly Alam's more realistic appraisal was not welcomed by the Shah. The Shah's confidence was increasingly evident in his public statements. When asked about the increased level of terrorist activity inside Iran, he derisively remarked, "[H]ow can an organization of only 50 members threaten a country of 30 million?…Even if they were half a million people they couldn't do anything. The assistant cooks of the Imperial Army alone would be able to deal with them."[74]

On the international front, Iran asserted itself in regional disputes. Although the British maintained a reduced political presence and influence in the Gulf, their literal and symbolic withdrawal presented Tehran with the opportunity to stake its claim to leadership in the region, which was supported by both the Americans and the British.[75] In the case of Bahrain, Iran had long laid claim to the British protectorate, although the Shah had come to the conclusion that it was neither strategically nor economically important enough to expend the political and military capital that would be necessary to achieve Iranian sovereignty. While he was concerned that simply abandoning Iran's claim to Bahrain would provoke domestic criticism, the Shah was also aware that there was likely to be a serious Arab backlash if Iran did take control of the kingdom.[76] Demonstrating his emerging statesmanship, the Shah negotiated a face-saving resolution with the British whereby Bahrain's population held a referendum on the question of sovereignty, thus allowing him to rescind Iran's claim on the grounds that he was respecting the Bahraini people's right to self-determination. By doing so, he removed an irritating bone of contention with Saudi Arabia and other local Arab states, reinforced his own reputation at home as a statesman and a nationalist, and paved the way for an expanding Iranian role in the Persian Gulf.

Britain's withdrawal of forces in 1971 created another opportunity for the Shah to assert his authority in the Persian Gulf. Iran claimed sovereignty over the strategically vital islands of the Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa in the Strait of Hormuz, which controlled access to the Persian Gulf and were occupied by the British. Saudi Arabia, another important American ally, rejected the Iranian claim. The Shah demonstrated his determination to obtain these islands when he remarked to Court Minister Alam that "if need be we'll take them by force, and the Arabs and British can go fuck themselves."[77] Washington, meanwhile, had no desire to become entangled in a dispute between two of its close allies, nor did it wish to take up Britain's mediating role in the Gulf.

Recognizing the delicate and difficult position that they found themselves in, British officials on the eve of their withdrawal discretely notified the Shah that British forces would be leaving the region in the following 24 hours. Taking the hint, the Shah quickly arranged for Iranian troops to move onto the Tunbs as soon as British forces were gone.[78] Whilst this "wasn't a very proud moment for the British Empire," it allowed Iran to occupy the Tunbs without involving the United Kingdom – or the United States – in a localized and potentially divisive conflict.[79] Although Iran's expansionism was not welcomed by Saudi Arabia, it demonstrated Tehran's increasing prominence in the region, and the speed with which the issue was resolved meant it did not provoke as fierce a response as Washington feared.

However, despite his increasing confidence and Iran's progress towards leadership of the Gulf, the Shah remained deeply concerned by developments within neighbouring Iraq.[80] When contemplating the high economic burden of the Iranian military, it was now from Iraq, rather than Egypt, that he saw the most likely threat to his country. He lamented, "[W]hat alternative do we have? We cannot leave ourselves prey to a country such as Iraq."[81] In 1971, an Iraqi defector warned Iranian intelligence services that Baghdad was "planning a campaign of assassinations and terrorist activities" against both Kurds and Iranians designed to provoke conflict between the two people.[82] In 1972, tensions between the two countries reached new heights when Iraq forcibly deported tens of thousands of Iranians, prompting a furious Shah to warn Baghdad "not to go beyond certain limits."[83] The English-language Iranian newspaper *Kayhan International* reiterated the Shah's message, arguing that because "one should not expect…any change either of heart or of policy" from the Ba'athist regime, Iran "ought to be prepared to put it down whenever and wherever it seems to be going beyond tolerable limits."[84] The Iraqi threat was exacerbated by its close relations with the Soviet Union, which led Tehran to believe that Baghdad had become the latest tool of Soviet expansionism in the Middle East.

For both Tehran and Washington, the spectre of Soviet encroachment in the Middle East hovered ominously over their policies towards the area and each other. Moscow's intentions were viewed with deep suspicion by US officials, who believed that the pre-World War II Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreements stated that "the region in the direction of the Persian Gulf is the center of aspirations of the Soviet Union."[85] The threat of an invasion of the region by the USSR had diminished in the decades since the early days of the Cold War, but American policymakers remained wary of attempts by Moscow to increase its influence through

subversive means in countries such as Iraq and Syria.[86] In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad expanded its ties with the Soviet Union, becoming increasingly dependent on economic and military aid from Moscow.[87] The Shah, echoing American assessments, voiced his concerns to MacArthur about the "ever-increasing Soviet activities" in the Gulf region. Moscow, the Shah believed, would use the "classic Soviet tactic" of utilizing "popular front" regimes in order to extend communist influence.[88]

The development of friendly relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq in the early 1970s thus greatly exacerbated his unease about the threat Baghdad posed to Iran.[89] Although in recent years Iran had improved relations with Moscow through trade, joint industrial projects, and numerous exchanges of official visits, the Shah remained wary of his northern neighbour. In June 1970, the Shah noted with some anxiety a reference by the Soviet ambassador to an Iran–Soviet agreement reached in 1921, which made provisions to allow the USSR to militarily occupy Iran if developments there threatened the Soviet Union. The treaty was signed at a time when Iran was very much still a pawn in the games of London and Moscow and represented the type of capitulation in the face of foreign intervention that Iranian nationalists of all stripes abhorred. The fact that the Soviet Union appeared to be alluding to this treaty and the alleged rights contained therein – which Tehran argued had been made obsolete by later national and international developments – was interpreted by the Iranian government as evidence of Moscow's subversive intentions towards Iran and the Persian Gulf.[90]

By November 1970, the Shah was increasingly "worried" by the extension of Soviet influence along Iran's periphery.[91] As part of its strategy of expanding its reach into the Middle East through non-military, diplomatic means, the Soviet Union signed a treaty of friendship with Iraq in April 1972.[92] For Iran, the most worrying aspect of the agreement was its vague pledge that the two countries would cooperate on military matters in order to support each other's security. Although Moscow had already been supplying the Ba'athist regime with arms, the agreement raised the possibility that Iraq would allow the establishment of Soviet military bases on its territory if it was deemed vital to the security of the Soviet Union. According to the Iranian ambassador in Washington, Amir-Aslan Afshar, the new treaty was clearly "further evidence of Soviet gains in the area."[93] No longer simply "worried" about Soviet expansionism, the Shah was said to be "livid" that Moscow had embraced Baghdad in such an overt manner.[94]

It was within this context of burgeoning tension between Iraq and Iran and friendship between Baghdad and Moscow that Richard Nixon arrived in Tehran towards the end of May 1972. The president arrived from Moscow following a series of meetings with the Soviet leadership, which had sought to establish a greater platform for detente between the United States and the Soviet Union. Having postponed a visit to Iran in 1969, US officials felt it would be prudent for the president to make a brief stop in Tehran to reassure the Shah of America's continued support for his regime in spite of Washington's evolving rapprochement with the Soviets.

At the meetings between the two heads of state, Nixon was accompanied by Henry Kissinger while the Shah attended on his own. This was not so much a sign of the Shah's friendship with Nixon, although that was also evident, as it was an illustration of the fact that Iran's foreign policy rested upon the Shah's shoulders; as Asadollah Alam wryly noted, "[W]hat faith HIM puts in our PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs!"[95] It was during these meetings that Nixon asked the Shah to "protect" him.[96] This was an astonishing request for a president of the United States to make and revealed the faith that Nixon had in the Shah. The decision to allow Iran to purchase any military hardware – with the important exception of nuclear weaponry – reinforced the close ties between the Nixon administration and the Shah's Iran. When Harold Saunders of the NSC remarked upon the Shah's "rather free interpretation" of Nixon's commitment, Kissinger made it clear exactly what was expected of US officials: "In short, it is not repeat not our policy to discourage Iranian arms purchases."[97] By removing existing constraints on what the Shah could buy from the United States, Nixon had made a significant distinction from previous policies; Iran's arms purchases would no longer be reviewed by Washington and would be left entirely in Iranian hands.

Moreover, it signalled the abandonment of any residual link between military sales and Iran's internal development. However, in many ways Nixon's new policy was not so far removed from that of the Johnson administration. In response to the decline of US influence over the Shah, Johnson had extended increasing amounts of military credit to Tehran in order to facilitate arms sales. Of course, Johnson had ensured that all sales would be subject to Washington's approval, a requisite that Nixon abandoned. The level of arms sales agreed to by Johnson was also relatively minor compared to the bonanza that would result from Nixon's visit to Tehran: $200 million between 1964 and 1968; $200 million between 1966 and 1970; plus $100 million per year from 1968 until 1973. Even so, the figures were increasing, just as Washington's ability

to dissuade or reject the Shah's demands was declining. During the early years of the Nixon administration, Iran's enormous oil wealth convinced the Shah that he could easily pay for the military he so desired. Combined with the rising threat from Iraq and Soviet encroachment into the Persian Gulf, it was harder than ever for Washington to turn down the Shah's requests for arms sales. In many ways, then, the Nixon administration simply responded to the changing nature of the US–Iranian relationship with the only tool available to it – arms sales – by removing all previous limitations.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the meeting between Richard Nixon and the Shah of Iran in Tehran on 31 May 1972 was a historic event. Coming immediately after the president's visit to Moscow, the meeting in Tehran symbolized the close relationship between the United States and Iran and affirmed the administration's stated policy of supporting its allies under the Nixon Doctrine. The agreement to sell Iran unrestricted military equipment, with the exception of nuclear arms, was an unprecedented and significant step in US policy. However, it stemmed not from Nixon's fondness for the Shah but reflected the changing nature of the US–Iranian relationship and the geopolitical make-up of the Persian Gulf.

The changing picture in the Persian Gulf following Britain's withdrawal meant Nixon, unwilling and unable to take over the British role, had to rely increasingly on local allies. Iran, with its modernizing military, development programme, and apparent stability, looked to be the ideal candidate for shoring up American interests in the region. By removing previous constraints on arms sales to the Shah, Nixon marked both the end of modernization's influence over US foreign policy towards Iran and the acceptance that Washington's influence over Tehran was also in terminal decline. In the years before his visit to Tehran, Nixon had closely followed the precedents set by Lyndon Johnson, using military credit as a means to retain some measure of control over the Shah's military expenditure. As Iran's ability to pay for its arms became more obvious, Washington's ability to dictate the terms on which she bought American arms, already dwindling during the Johnson years, at last evaporated.

At its heart, the Nixon administration's policy was centred on the same assumption that had driven the Johnson administration: that the use of military sales was the most effective means of maintaining a close

relationship with the Shah and hopefully some influence over Iran's foreign policy. Modernization and economic development were still considered important by some US officials, even into the less hospitable environment of the Nixon administration, but, just as these issues had been under LBJ, they were sidelined in favour of maintaining a close relationship with the Shah. Ultimately, Nixon's policies towards Iran were a continuation – and then extension – of the policies embraced by the Johnson administration. The decisions made in Tehran in May 1972, therefore, were not so much a turning point or a complete reversal of policy but were, in fact, in Harold Saunders' words, "a step to a new plateau."[98]

Conclusion

On 26 October 1972, still delighted by Richard Nixon's decision just three months earlier to take the lid off arms sales to Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi celebrated his 53rd birthday. The following morning he allowed himself a later than usual start before going for his customary morning horse ride. As the Shah was setting out, his close friend and former prime minister, Asadollah Alam, was just returning from his own ride. Contemplating whether to join the Shah but weary from the exercise, Alam decided to go straight home, reasoning that "it's unfair that he should see nothing but the same tired old faces."[1] However, as the Shah's court minister, there was no time for Alam to rest when he got home, with the phone ringing almost as soon as he walked through the door. It was the American ambassador, Joseph Farland, calling with an urgent request. The president had asked Farland to relay a message to the Shah asking that Iran put its stock of 90 F-5 aircraft at Washington's disposal for use in Vietnam.

The move was part of the Nixon administration's attempt to finally bring some kind of resolution to the war in Vietnam. Alam was prepared for just such a call, as Nixon had made the same request a week earlier.[2] He immediately rang the Shah, who gave his approval, and informed Farland.[3] The ambassador was both impressed by the speed of the decision and relieved that Tehran would support the US in this endeavour. The irony was surely not lost in Washington that after years of the Shah badgering US officials for arms, it was Iran who was now providing the United States with military equipment. The deal neatly encapsulated the strength of the US–Iranian relationship following Nixon's visit to Tehran. Moreover, it symbolized the reversal in roles, whereby it was the United States that was relying on Iran for support. Washington's decline in influence over Tehran was reinforced when the Shah declared that, although willing to help, he would only permit the use of 32 aircraft.[4] For its part, the extremely grateful Nixon administration worked hard to reward Iran by accelerating the provision of replacement aircraft.

In the end, the exchange of aircraft here amounted to little more than chickenfeed when compared with the extraordinary sums the Shah would spend on military equipment throughout the 1970s. Even so,

it illustrated the remarkable distance that the US–Iranian relationship had travelled since John F. Kennedy had first met with the Shah on a rain-soaked April afternoon in 1962. Where much of the rhetoric following that meeting had centred upon the need to promote Iran's economic development, by the end of 1972, it was the question of arms sales that was at the heart of US–Iranian relations. The evolution of the relationship between Washington and Tehran during the 11 years between Kennedy's inauguration and Nixon's visit to Tehran illustrate the limitations of modernization as a guiding principle for US foreign policy. The Cold War imperatives that drove JFK, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon ensured that, because of Iran's strategic and geographic importance, Washington preferred to promote stability over – and often at the expense of – modernization. The fact that the Shah of Iran was increasingly able to assert his own vision of modernity, which often clashed with American ideas about reform and development, ultimately rendered modernization theory largely ineffective and, for practical purposes, obsolete.

If further proof were needed that Washington had embraced the Shah and his vision for a modern Iran, and that such a policy was fraught with problems posed by a profound lack of foresight, it would be provided by President Jimmy Carter on New Year's Eve 1977. On paper, one might have expected Carter to buck the trend set by previous presidents of deepening American ties with the Shah of Iran. Aside from his firm desire in the wake of the Watergate scandal to distance himself from the style of presidency practiced by Nixon, the deeply committed Christian ran a presidential campaign that promised to put human rights at the centre of his administration's foreign policy. Given the Shah's horrendous track record in that area – SAVAK-enforced repression had seen the arrest of thousands of dissidents and the widespread torture and execution of political prisoners – it seemed unlikely that Carter would heap praise on the Pahlavi regime as his predecessors had done. Indeed, Carter had in fact raised the issue of Iran's human rights record in public, which may have been a turning point towards a relaxation in repression by the regime. Even so, just as those of Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon had been, Jimmy Carter's policies towards Iran were dictated by America's strategic interests, and, by the time he came into office, the ties that bound Washington to Tehran were of Gordian proportions. And, just as they had done under Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, those interests rested squarely on the Shah.

When President Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter visited Tehran at the end of 1977, the human rights advocate reaffirmed the strength

of US–Iranian relations. In a toast that has since become famous for its distinct lack of prescience, Carter proclaimed that "Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world." Echoing the "massage policy" of earlier US policymakers, the president spoke of "the respect and the admiration and love" Iranians felt for the Shah. Carter told the Shah that "the transformation that has taken place in this nation is indeed remarkable under your leadership" and that he "was profoundly impressed…with your wisdom and your judgment and your sensitivity and insight."[5] Within weeks, this "island of stability" was rocked by some of the largest and most intense demonstrations the Middle East had ever seen. The anti-Shah movement that had been gathering momentum since October 1977 picked up speed and support from across Iran's religious and secular opposition groups. Just over a year after Carter's speech praising the Shah, the Iranian monarch was forced into exile, and the last remnants of the Pahlavi regime collapsed shortly thereafter. Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been identified 15 years earlier as a potential threat to the regime by US official William Miller, swept to power to create the world's first Islamic Republic; after decades of rule by a pro-Western monarch, Tehran had become an anti-Western, authoritarian theocracy in a revolution lasting little over 12 months.

The speed with which events overtook American policymakers and other observers put into sharp relief the tragicomic nature of Jimmy Carter's "island of stability" speech. Yet we really should not be surprised at all that even as a burgeoning protest movement was emerging as a bona fide revolution an American president would seek to strengthen Washington's ties with the Shah's regime in Tehran. The administrations of Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon had set in motion a set of policies that embraced the Shah, thereby sidelining issues of modernization and development in favour of stability and security. The defining feature of these three administrations was that continuity was king; for each president, the Shah was the key to US interests in Iran. Maintaining a close relationship with the Shah was paramount for the United States, regardless of the different personal feelings each president had for the Iranian monarch. As this book has shown, time and again American policymakers advocated continuity in US policy towards Iran, pinning their hopes on the Shah. In an effort to keep their close ally happy, US officials abandoned issues of development in favour of strengthening the arms sales relationship between Washington and Tehran. As the 1970s progressed, continuity remained integral to US interests in Iran, and the scale of military sales to the Shah's regime exploded following Nixon's decision to lift restrictions on sales in May 1972.

By November, the Shah had placed orders for American military equipment worth up to $3.5 billion. As Stephen McGlinchey notes, this rapid spending spree "was more than the annual US bill for military assistance to *all* of its allies."[6] When Nixon's presidency collapsed in the aftermath of Watergate, his successor, Gerald Ford, followed his policy to the letter by pursuing deepening ties with Tehran. Echoing the policies of his predecessors, Ford immediately sought to reassure the Shah that his administration would seek to maintain the close relationship with Iran that had developed in recent years. Considering the fact that Ford's closest foreign policy advisor was Henry Kissinger, who had also been Nixon's key strategist and had firmly supported his policies towards Iran, it was not unusual that he would prefer continuity to change in Washington's relations with Tehran. For his part, the Shah was pleased that the blank cheque on arms sales issued by Nixon would still be enforced by the new administration.

Even so, in spite of the freedom given to the Shah regarding his military spending, Ford encountered two issues when dealing with the Shah that would have been familiar to his predecessors. Firstly, as Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon had come to understand all too well, the Shah's appetite for military equipment was insatiable. While Washington no longer sought to curtail Tehran's military spending, American policymakers were less keen on Iran acquiring the capacity to develop a nuclear weapon. However, in the mid-1970s, the Shah set his sights on turning Iran into a nuclear power. Where previously his focus had very much been on overcoming American resistance to increasing Iran's military spending, now the Shah's ambitions for his country turned towards obtaining nuclear technology. Once more, US policymakers found themselves having to try to curb the Shah's enthusiasm for expensive and, as far as they were concerned, unnecessary prestige equipment. Although Nixon's blank cheque ensured Washington was receptive to Iranian military purchases, it did not stretch to nuclear weaponry or technology. Just as their predecessors had tried to balance resisting the Shah's military demands with the need to maintain a close US–Iranian relationship, US officials found themselves having to discourage the Shah from pursuing nuclear technology.[7]

Secondly, just as he had throughout the 1960s, when the Shah feared he would not get his own way, he raised the spectre of a Soviet–Iranian deal to pressure Washington into giving in to his demands.[8] Despite the evolving nature of the Cold War in the 1970s, the United States was keen to prevent any serious Soviet influence in Iran. The Cold War dictates that had been central to US policy towards Iran during

the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations remained integral to Ford's thinking about Iran. By using familiar tactics, the Shah was able to exploit American fears about Soviet subversion in order to manipulate Washington into giving in to his demands. In this respect, he again found a useful ally in the figure of the US ambassador to Tehran. In the 1960s, Julius Holmes, Armin Meyer, and Douglas MacArthur had each frequently argued that Washington should heed the Shah's strident demands on the grounds that the United States needed him. In the mid-1970s, Ambassador Richard Helms followed a similar line, taking up what Stephen McGlinchey has termed an "advocate-type role."[9]

The 1970s was not, then, an era of problem-free harmony for the US–Iranian relationship. Although the Shah remained exceedingly close to Washington, especially on the question of arms sales, of course, he caused the US considerable economic problems when he led the OPEC revolution in 1973 that increased the price of petroleum and reformulated the global oil economy.[10] Almost completely shut out during the Nixon administration, Congress saw an opportunity to wrest back control from the White House in domestic and international affairs. After the disgrace of Nixon's departure from office, Congress sought to reassert its role in US foreign policy. The arms sales relationship with Tehran became a battleground for Congressional resurgence, with the Ford administration facing resistance over the extraordinary scale of military sales to Iran.[11] Even so, Ford maintained a close relationship with the Shah through these sales. In 1976, the president authorized the sale of 160 F-16s for $3.8 billion, generating a furious response within Congress.[12]

Jimmy Carter's election at the end of the year posed a serious problem for the Shah. Here was a president who had pledged himself to pursue a human rights agenda and a general arms reduction.[13] Ultimately, though, just like his predecessors, Carter took a pragmatic approach to US relations with Iran. The Shah once again demonstrated his ability to coerce the United States, through Washington's economic reliance on arms sales as well as by making significant military purchases from the Soviet Union, in order to maintain the upper hand. The patterns that came to define American policy towards Iran up until the eve of the Iranian Revolution were, however, put in place much earlier.

As the Cold War emerged in the post-war period, the United States began to show a greater interest in Iran. Although Christian missionaries, a few oil companies, and a number of financial advisors engaged with Iranian development before the war, it was the emerging conflict with the Soviet Union that caused Washington to turn its attention to events in Tehran. The occupation during the war by American, British, and Soviet

troops, followed by the 1946 Azerbaijan crisis, highlighted Iran's strategic importance situated as it was along the Soviet border. In the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration viewed Iran through the prism of the Cold War, expanding ties with Tehran and entangling the United States in Iranian affairs. Due to its huge oil resources and position as a potential bulwark against communist encroachment into the greater Middle East, Eisenhower and his advisors saw Iran as a key Cold War battleground.

The CIA coup in 1953 that overthrew Iran's democratically elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadeq, was the consequence of the Eisenhower administration's Cold War mindset, which feared the prime minister was creating opportunities for communist subversion in the country. With the Shah restored to the Peacock Throne, the Eisenhower administration embarked on a series of policies that strengthened and expanded the US–Iranian relationship in order to bind Iran, a vital component in the US strategy of containment, closely to the United States. Between 1953 and 1961, the United States furnished Tehran with $436 million of military assistance, $345 million of economic assistance in the form of grants, and $266 million of loans.[14] Following the oil nationalization crisis and the resulting coup, US oil companies made up 40 per cent of the consortium that ran Iran's oil industry. The expansion of the role of these American oil companies in Iran, the Eisenhower administration's use of economic assistance, and the operations of non-government actors, such as the Ford Foundation, ensured that Washington had a deepening interest in the country's development. Although issues of modernization were not Eisenhower's primary concern – focused as he was on Tehran's strategic significance – by the time John F. Kennedy entered the White House in 1961, the United States was heavily invested in Iran's future stability and development.

Given Kennedy's rhetorical emphasis on development and modernization and the proliferation of activist policymakers and advocates of modernization throughout his administration, one might have expected the new administration to chart a course in Iran prioritizing these issues. However, it soon became abundantly clear that Kennedy's embrace of modernization owed more to its rhetorical value than anything else. Moreover, the Kennedy administration's policies towards Iran illustrated the limitations inherent in modernization as a guiding force for US foreign policy. During the Kennedy era, when modernization theory was supposedly enjoying its heyday, Iran was the site of contesting views over how to understand and apply modernization.

The Kennedy years were marked by a complex atmosphere of consensus and division within Washington over US policy towards Iran. The

question of whether the United States should push the Shah towards modernization and reform created friction within the administration. Policymakers such as NSC staffer Robert Komer believed that US interests in Iran would be best achieved by promoting economic development and reform. In contrast, traditionalist officials such as Ambassador Julius C. Holmes argued that seeing as the Shah was the man in charge in Iran, it was wiser to move more slowly on issues of development. Holmes insisted that if the United States pushed the Shah too hard to modernize and reform along lines that he objected to, Washington risked alienating him. Given Iran's significance as an oil-producing country and its integral role as part of the strategy of containment, Holmes argued, jeopardizing the US relationship with the Shah was clearly not an option. The Kennedy administration's inability to reconcile these diverging views resulted in an incoherent approach towards Iran.

Even as the Kennedy administration experienced divisions over how far and how fast to push the Shah towards modernization, there existed a consensus among US policymakers that complicated matters even further. The Kennedy administration, just as successive American governments also would, believed that despite the Shah's numerous shortcomings, he was the only viable political leader in Iran and, therefore, the key to Iranian stability. American officials felt it was imperative that the United States ensure the Shah did not become disillusioned with Washington. At Komer's suggestion, they adopted a "massage policy" whereby US officials would flatter the Shah's ego in order to reassure him of the administration's interest in Iran and appreciation of his faithful pro-Western stance. This policy strengthened US ties with the Shah despite the misgivings of Kennedy and others, including Komer himself.

The Kennedy administration's engagement with the question of modernization in Iran was, therefore, extremely complicated. Modernization theory was seen as a useful framework for understanding the developing world, but it did not have a significant impact on day-to-day policy. Komer's enthusiasm for a vigorous modernization policy was tempered by his clashes with the more cautious approach advocated by Holmes. Both men, however, adopted the "massage policy" that led to the Kennedy administration embracing the Shah. By flattering the Shah on a number of his domestic and international policies, the United States effectively endorsed his vision of modernity for Iran; namely, the perpetuation of the Pahlavi dynasty, backed by a modern military. This caused the United States to miss a number of opportunities to pressure the Shah on questions of development. However, under Kennedy, the

question of modernization had been increasingly sidelined in favour of pursuing stability through support for the Shah's regime.

The patterns that had come to define US–Iranian relations in the Kennedy years continued during the Johnson administration. The ties between Washington and Tehran were bolstered even further by Lyndon Johnson as, like Kennedy, he sought to maintain a close relationship with the Shah. The prevailing view among American officials was that the Shah remained the key to Iran's stability. In the mid-1960s, the activities of Iranian anti-Shah student organizations in America created tension for US and Iranian policymakers. Groups such as the Iranian Students Association, aligned with the National Front back home, protested against the Shah's repressive methods and argued that US support for the Pahlavi regime was preventing Iranians from achieving democracy. The ISA, Johnson administration, and Tehran were all engaged in a contest over the issue of modernization in Iran. In order to placate the Shah's growing irritation at their inability to silence these critics, American officials extended $200 million of military credit in 1964, spread out over the next four years. The United States was effectively prioritizing the Shah's vision of modernity, based on his desire for a strong military to ensure Iranian security, above pressuring him on questions of economic or political development. Like his predecessor, Johnson preferred to focus on maintaining a strong relationship with the Shah, believing him to be the best means of providing stability for Iran.

For many Iranians, the damaging nature of the relationship was illustrated by the passing of the Status of Forces Agreement in 1964, just before the military credit agreement was reached. Wary of granting external powers extensive privileges, ordinary Iranians viewed the SOFA as an example of how Washington dictated the terms of US–Iranian relations. In their eyes, the Shah was little more than an American puppet. In reality, the SOFA signified the shift in the relationship as the Johnson administration began to rely more heavily upon the Shah's regime. The military credit deal, which most Iranians assumed was the Shah's reward for allowing the SOFA to pass, reflected Washington's declining influence over Tehran; recognizing this reality, US officials responded favourably to the Shah's insistent demands for credit in order to keep him happy. Moreover, the SOFA affair fomented deep opposition to the Pahlavi regime inside Iran from the previously dormant religious urban and rural masses. The charismatic Ayatollah Khomeini became the beacon of a new form of resistance to the Shah's modernization programme; it was during the 1960s, while in exile, that Khomeini constructed his

alternative vision of Iranian modernity, placing Islam at the centre of politics and society.

By the late 1960s, the Johnson administration had effectively accepted the Shah's vision of modernity; although economic development was still considered important, the US–Iranian relationship was built upon military sales. The Shah skilfully exploited his support for the American war in Vietnam to extract greater sums of military credit from Washington. This intersected with the problems created by the Indo-Pakistan War as a result of the US decision to cut military supplies to Pakistan during the conflict. Once more, the Shah was able to push for arms sales as part of his ploy to perpetuate the Pahlavi regime.

The 1967 Six Day War and Britain's declaration that it would withdraw from the Middle East allowed the Shah to present himself as the only viable candidate for ensuring stability in the Persian Gulf. Tehran's warm relations with Israel earned goodwill in Washington as Iran took advantage of Britain's impending withdrawal, offering to step into the resulting political vacuum. Faced with these developments, the United States found itself increasingly reliant on the Shah's regime for the security of the Gulf and to contain Soviet encroachment into the region. The further decline in American influence over the Shah coincided with the end of the USAID programme in Iran. While modernization theory had for a number of years been a subsidiary factor in US policy, the final closure of the AID offices in Tehran symbolized what was already a reality of US–Iranian relations: namely, that the United States had marginalized considerations of development and embraced the Shah's preferred path of military modernization.

If one views US–Iranian relations during the 1960s as a contest over modernization, one can see that the early Nixon years represented a continuation, rather than a sharp deviation, of the patterns set out under Kennedy and Johnson. Nixon's policy towards Iran was not based on his friendship with the Shah, as some have contended, but on the recognition that Washington's influence over Tehran was in serious decline. The withdrawal of British forces from the region ensured the United States would have to rely increasingly on local allies. The application of the Nixon Doctrine to Iran, which culminated in the decision to sell Tehran any non-nuclear military equipment without restrictions, was an extension and expansion of the military sales relationship established earlier by LBJ. Nixon's policies towards Iran echoed those of his predecessor as he sought to maintain a close relationship with the Shah through the use of military credit even while he recognized that Iran's ability to purchase arms meant that American influence over his military programme

was diminishing. Issues of modernization and development, which had been sidelined during the Johnson administration, were abandoned in favour of embracing the Shah and tightening US–Iranian relations. By focusing on military sales as a means of maintaining influence over Iran, Nixon and Kissinger were following the pattern set by Lyndon Johnson. Their unquestioned assumption that the Shah was the key to Iranian stability, meanwhile, had its origins in the Kennedy administration's incoherent support for the Pahlavi regime. The agreement reached in May 1972 during Nixon's visit to Tehran thus illustrated the fulfilment of Washington's immutable support for the Shah's vision of modernity for Iran.

The contest over modernization in Iran had been won, but not by the United States. Washington maintained a close relationship with the Shah throughout the 1970s based not on American ideas of modernization but on unwavering support for the Shah's military-centric modernization programme. During the 1960s, the Shah exploited US fears about communist encroachment in order to persuade US officials to accept his vision of modernity. As Washington became increasingly reliant upon Iran for maintaining security in the Persian Gulf and because of its role in containing Soviet expansion into the Middle East, successive American presidents came to favour stability at the expense of promoting modernization. Despite the strength of the post-1972 US–Iranian relationship and the Shah's continuing pro-Western stance, Nixon's decision in May did not generate much success for the Americans. Indeed, one direct result of the meeting was the Nixon administration's complicity in the Shah's reprehensible repression of Iran's Kurdish population.[15]

By obtaining virtually unconditional support from the United States for his vision of a modern Iran, the Shah may have won the contest over modernization, but it proved to be a hollow – and short-lived – victory in the end. Many of the key features of the Shah's modernization programme – astronomical military expenditures; a focus on prestige projects rather than lasting economic development; the alienation of great swathes of the population through overt Westernization; brutal dictatorial repression by security forces and the omnipresence of SAVAK; corruption within his own family – produced widespread opposition to his rule, leading to the revolution that overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty.[16] A smorgasbord of competing visions of modernity – from secular leftists to theocratic Islamists – lay behind the revolution, coalescing around the revolutionaries' opposition to the Shah. US–Iranian relations underwent a dramatic and immediate downturn that has yet to recover.[17] Since the revolution, the narrative of Iranian development has been in

the hands of the Islamic Republic's quasi-democratic theocracy, which has turned sharply away from the Shah's vision of modernity and pursued modernization through an emphasis on authoritarian Islamic revitalization. Moreover, the massive unrest that followed the disputed 2009 presidential election and the resulting brutality of the regime's crackdown against the popular reformist Green Movement, as well as the election of the moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani as president in June 2013 and the ensuing "culture war" with hardline critics of his government, show that the long contest over modernization and the "quest for democracy" in Iran is far from over.[18] The American role in this narrative has inevitably been excised due to the unbridled animosity between Washington and Tehran that developed after the revolution. Yet Rouhani's efforts to engage more openly with the West, including the United States, have resulted in serious negotiations between Washington and Tehran over Iran's nuclear programme in 2014. However, as we have seen, the capacity for the United States to influence and direct Iranian development has always been limited, even during the 1960s and 1970s at the height of the US–Iranian alliance.

Notes

Introduction

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Perspective," in Stephanie Cronin, Ed., *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 19–36; Osamu Miyata, "The Tudeh Military Network during the Oil Nationalization Period," *Middle Eastern Studies,* 23.3 (Jul., 1987), pp. 313–328.

60 Roosevelt published his own recollection of the coup in *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979). The official CIA history of the event, written by another one of its architects, Donald Wilber, was obtained by James Risen and published in the *New York Times* on 16 April and 18 June 2000; it is available in its entirety at the National Security Archive of George Washington University http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/ (Accessed 14 Jul. 2013). For the most authoritative scholarly accounts of the coup, as well as the events leading up to it and its repercussions, see Gasiorowski, "The 1953 *Coup D'etat* in Iran," pp. 261–286; Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Eds., *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004); Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003); Steve Marsh, "The United States, Iran, and Operation 'Ajax': Inverting Interpretative Orthodoxy," *Middle Eastern Studies,* 39.3 (Jul., 2003), pp. 1–38. The renowned Iranian historian Ervand Abrahamian has published an account of the events: *The Coup: 1953, The CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.–Iranian Relations* (New York: The New Press, 2013). Where traditional accounts typically emphasize the vital role of the CIA in both orchestrating and implementing the coup against Mossadeq, Moyara de Moraes Ruehsen highlights the significance of Iranian forces, as well as arguing that Mossadeq's "downfall can be largely attributed to several character flaws and a series of gross miscalculations"; Moyara de Moraes Ruehsen, "Operation 'Ajax' Revisited: Iran, 1953," *Middle Eastern Studies,* 29.3 (Jul., 1993), p. 482. Similarly, Darioush Bayandor argues "that internal political dynamics more than foreign intrigues were responsible for the ultimate blow to Mosaddeq and his national movement"; Darioush Bayandor, *Iran and the CIA: The Fall of Mosaddeq Revisited* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 155.

61 Gasiorowski, "The 1953 *Coup D'etat* in Iran," pp. 251–256.

62 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, pp. 209–210; Lytle, *Origins of the Iranian-American Alliance,* p. 213. Dulles offered Kermit Roosevelt the opportunity to head the CIA's covert operation to overthrow the democratic government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. Ironically, Roosevelt declined on the grounds that the situation in Guatemala was not suited to a *coup d'etat*. For a discussion of the legacy of the 1953 coup and its impact on the workings of the CIA, see Douglas Little, "Mission Impossible: The CIA and the Cult of Covert Action in the Middle East," *Diplomatic History,* 28.5 (Nov., 2004), pp. 663–701.

63 Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941–1973: A Study of Foreign Policy in Modernizing Nations* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), pp. 260–261.

64 Marsh, *Anglo-American Relations and Cold War Oil*, p. 164.

65 Mark J. Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 90–92.

66 Ibid., pp. 165–166; Goode, *The United States and Iran*, pp. 138–153.

67 Lytle, *Origins of the Iranian-American Alliance,* pp. 214–215.
68 Kristen Blake, *The U.S.-Soviet Confrontation in Iran, 1945–1962: A Case in the Annals of the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), p. 105.
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71 Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy,* pp. 273–280. Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Special Message to the Congress on the Situation in the Middle East," 5 Jan. 1957. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=11007 (Accessed on 20 Jul. 2013).
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73 Goode, *The United States and Iran*, pp. 159–162.
74 Ibid., p. 282.
75 Stephen McGlinchey, "Building a Client State: American Arms Policies Towards Iran, 1950–1963," *The Central European Journal of International and Security Studies,* 6.2 (2012), p. 21.
76 Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah,* p. 94.
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Chapter 2

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2 "The Press: The View from the Villa," 28 Apr. 1961, *Time Magazine*. On Soviet policies towards the developing world, see Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Moscow's Third World Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988; 1990); Roy Allison, *The Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-Alignment in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
3 Muriel Atkin, "Myths of Soviet-Iranian Relations," in Nikki R. Keddie and Mark J.Gasiorowski, Eds., *Neither East nor West: Iran, the Soviet Union, and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 100–114; Richard Hermann, "The Role of Iran in Soviet Perceptions and Policy, 1946–1988," in Ibid., pp. 63–99; Robert G. Irani, "Changes in Soviet Policy Toward Iran," in Robert H. Donaldson, Ed., *The Soviet Union in the Third World: Successes and Failures* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 192–209.
4 "Iran: Next?", 19 May 1961, *Time Magazine*.
5 Goode, *The United States and Iran*, p. 169.
6 Bill, *Eagle and the Lion,* p. 137.
7 "Memorandum of Conversation with Hedayatollah Matin-Daftari," 3 Jul. 1968. *Digital National Security Archive* (Hereafter referred to as *DNSA*), IR00688. Matin-Daftari, the grandson of former prime minister Mohammed Mossadeq, had regular contact with US embassy officials. In this particular meeting, he also notes that "many members of the court rejoiced on hearing the news that Robert Kennedy had been shot," suggesting that the Shah and his entourage favoured Nixon but also had little goodwill towards the Kennedy family. Abbas Milani notes that "more than once in his Daily journals,

[Asadollah] Alam [the Shah's close friend, confidante and former prime minister] claims that the Shah made illegal contributions to the Nixon presidential campaign in 1960 and did so again in 1968"; Milani, *The Shah*, p. 248.

8 This is the title of Bill's chapter on Kennedy's relationship with Iran; Bill, *Eagle and the Lion,* pp. 131–153.

9 Ibid., p. 149. David Collier makes an even stronger case for this idea; David R. Collier, "To Prevent a Revolution: John F. Kennedy and the Promotion of Development," *Diplomacy and Statecraft,* 34.3 (2013), pp. 456–475.

10 Goode, *The United States and Iran*, p. 169–170; "The Current Internal Political Situation in Iran," 11 Feb. 1961, attached to "Memorandum from the Vice Chairman of the Policy Planning Council (Morgan) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)," 27 Mar. 1961. *FRUS 196 1–1963 XVII,* p. 65.

11 Goode, *The United States and Iran*, pp. 167–181.

12 Summitt, "For a White Revolution," p. 575.

13 Nemchenok, "In Search of Stability amid Chaos," pp. 341–369.

14 Ibid., p. 360.

15 Summitt, "For a White Revolution," p. 563.

16 Collier, "To Prevent a Revolution," pp. 456–475.

17 These historians have also missed the other consensus within the Kennedy administration regarding the use of a "massage policy" to maintain a close relationship with the Shah, which, as we shall see in Chapter 3, further undermined the influence of modernization theory on Kennedy's policy and played a central role in US–Iranian relations right through until the Iranian Revolution.

18 Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 197; Gary A. Donaldson, *The First Modern Campaign: Kennedy, Nixon, and the Election of 1960* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), p. 95.

19 That is, until the emergence of Fred Greenstein's "hidden-hand" thesis, which argues that Eisenhower actually played a more active role in his administration's foreign policy than had previously been assumed; Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (John Hopkins University Press, 1984).

20 Stephen E. Ambrose and Douglas G. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 170.

21 David Webster, "Regimes in Motion: The Kennedy Administration and Indonesia's New Frontier, 1960–1962," *Diplomatic History,* 33.1 (Jan., 2009), p. 100. Robert Dean, using a gender framework, comes to a similar conclusion about the activist nature of Kennedy and his officials; Robert D. Dean, "Masculinity as Ideology: John F. Kennedy and the Domestic Politics of Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History,* 22.1 (Winter, 1998), pp. 29–62.

22 On efforts to create professional networks among potential leaders in developing countries, see Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 97–220.

23 John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), pp. 92–97.

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25 Ibid., p. 200.

26 Ibid., p. 216. For an overview of flexible response as a strategy see Ibid., pp. 197–271.
27 Ibid., p. 199.
28 On US interventions in the Third World, see Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Zachary Karabell, *Architects of Intervention: The United States, the Third World, and the Cold War, 1946–1962* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).
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30 Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future,* pp. 190–197; Mark H. Haefele, "Walt Rostow's Stages of Economic Growth: Ideas and Action," in David Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele and Michael E. Latham, Eds., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), pp. 81–103.
31 Ibid., pp. 180–185.
32 Jeremy Kuzmarov, "Modernizing Repression: Police Training, Political Violence, and Nation-Building in the 'American Century,'" *Diplomatic History,* 33.2 (Apr., 2009), pp. 191–221; Brad Simpson, "Indonesia's 'Accelerated Modernization' and the Global Discourse of Development, 1960–1975," *Diplomatic History,* 33.3 (Jun., 2009), pp. 467–486; Jefferson P. Marquis, "The Other Warriors: American Social Science and Nation Building in Vietnam," *Diplomatic History,* 24.1 (Winter, 2000), pp. 79–105.
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35 Christopher T. Fisher, "The Illusion of Progress," *Pacific Historical Review,* 75.1 (Feb., 2006), p. 27.
36 Cullather, "Development? It's History," p. 652.
37 Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and US Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 157–185. The legacy of modernization has most recently been seen in American nation-building efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq; Ibid., pp. 286–319; Nick Cullather, "Damming Afghanistan: Modernization in a Buffer State," *The Journal of American History,* 89.2 (Sep., 2002), pp. 512–537.
38 Popp, "An Application of Modernization Theory during the Cold War?" p. 98.
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48 Bird, *The Color of Truth*, p. 188; Preston, *The War Council*, p. 47.
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53 "Conversation Between President Kennedy and Lieutenant General Teimur Bakhtiar," 1 Mar. 1961. *FRUS 196 1–1963 XVII*, p. 40.
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66 Ibid., p. 107.
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108 "Memorandum of Conversation," 13 Apr. 1962. Ibid., p. 605.
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Chapter 3

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